

CYNTHIA DEWI OKA

Poet, Formerly Known as Activist, Formerly Known as Child Of God

Having lost my faith, again, in the given of an indifferent, discoverable order wherein my injuries might be filed alphabetically, safe from tsunamis and termites in color-coded cardboard boxes labeled International Relations, American History, Political Economy, the High Priestess, so that they might emerge aromatic, lipsticked, the day I am, at last, called to the podium of the ultraviolet narrative that is the stranger's literary citizenship in this country, which admires distillation, as in, here is my venti cup of suffering, but also complexity, as in, can you detect the floral notes in it;

having fled my home, again, the gossiping bamboos, ax with its face buried in a stump in the yard, the front steps flecked with cigarette ash and occasionally, cat piss—details that for a while kept the sweetness at bay, sweetness I did not have the webbing to hold and therefore resisted with my life, leaving me brittle, my head a cauldron tipping from side to side, saying, *yes, yes, yes, yes, yes*, in iron urgency—I was strict with it—determined to “channel my anger” as admonished by the nonprofit feminists, though relief would have been to waste it, to let scald in every direction;

having paid for therapy, hypnotherapy, physiotherapy, reiki, yoga; having scissored orchids, glaciers, Ganymede, and jellyfish out of the gloss of dead trees; having kneaded my sore liver in someone's Greenwich apartment while a camera rolled and sunset bled all over the romance of fire escapes; having framed my face in the toothpaste-spackled mirror with Post-Its of Sharpie'd affirmations, *you are worthy of [INSERT ANTONYMS OF THE VOID]*; having planked daily and prayed to herbs; having notated the astrologer's account of my past life, *you were either a cannon or a pirate*;

having, finally, cast every auntie, cousin, sister, comrade I have failed to avenge or forgive—

I can't always tell the difference—in my own ungrateful-immigrant version of that scene

in “The Monkfish” episode of *It's Okay to Not Be Okay* (yes, the K-drama), when

Jo Jae Soo,
the overlooked friend who wishes he were the beloved brother, tells Moon Gang-
Tae, *It's*
always those who are weak who act all tough . . . You weaklings should stick together then you
guys will become invincible, though my trouble is, I'm not convinced of that final clause,
having failed to gather enough evidence of anything beyond the gathering to justify

the gathering; just now, a strong wind blew, which you couldn't tell looking from
behind closed doors—the sky remains an unflappable, I almost want to say,
elitist—blue,
except for the trees that immediately surrendered their flags, scattering them to twist,
separately, like confetti (you can read this poem as a celebration) or children from my
part of the world, in cold so clear and merciless it is practically an intelligence. All
the way here, I asked Google, how does what I believe become what I deserve;
what now
if not the brief fellowship of the undefended, our weird, papery dances in
waning light.