Morí viví

When asked
How are you, my child
I responded honestly...

Today I am a child born from exile.
A mere seed of displaced children
Expelled from the mother's womb
Aching to return to their island...
   Disciplined –
     in their hopes
Of obtaining generational wealth
   Blessed in kisses
     De Abuelita
     From papito Dios
     Porque el siempre te cuidará

Hmm
Let’s sit for a second
Enjoy this moment
And be still in it
....

Standing on stages
Hasn’t been the easiest lately...
Yet as I pull these pieces back to me
Allow me to prove to you
That although what is given
Can just as easily be taken
The strength that lies in forgiveness
Could never allow división rooted in difference

Because

When I was young My mama told me that language barriers exist
I must be stupid because you don't understand my native lisp
But I outgrew you
Didn’t I?
Raised myself from the ashes
And rooted myself
Deeper than you ever thought possible

My people,
Whose will have been proven time and time again to be as strong as hurricanes
An Ever present light dusting of
Tierra Sagrada
You can find us
Clutching rosary beads
Quick to talk in tongues during prayers
Allow me to kiss both cheeks
Intent to send you home in bendiciones
Oh...at least my Abuelita... anyways...

In 2017 I spoke to you all about our history
Painted you pictures of our Puertorican victors
For some
I planted seeds of hope
between
each
stanza
of poetry

Today I speak to you all
About Resilience
You now know the
Tale of the
Exiled children
Today
I urge you
To taste the sweet flavor of rebirth
For some, this is a homecoming
An awakening
 Una clase mecla de la vida 
 Some days she tastes like sancocho 
 Earthy to keep you rooted 
 Yet other days she resemble the dull taste of homesickness 
 Belly aching 
 Palates uninterested 
 Due to the smells of mami’s kitchen 
 Not making it over Caribbean waters 
 Indifferent 

 They tell me I have sharp edges 
 But I’d you’d allow yourself to 
 Take a walk with me 
 I just might tell you my secrets 

 So the reality is 
 There are days I must face my abusers as I enter rooms 
 I lock eyes with them 
 Unwaveringly 
 Because I know in those moments that folks fail to uplift me 
 My ancestors urged me to hold me…. 

 And I do so lovingly - 
 With locked arms 
 And heavy breathing 
 I fall to my knees 
 And watch the world I love 
 Combust into rubble 
 And then I watch it 
 Come back together again as 
 One. 
 In the same breath. 

 Some days I’m the culprit 
 Some days it is simply the weight of these burdens
See...
My papa's calloused hands are reminders of his times on the tobacco field
Because he couldn't get a corporate job
To me, he was a hero with his dark complexion
as his skin glistened
Under the burning sun, he wore his straw hat
And sang tunes from the island and still managed to laugh
When he walked by they whispered
"Jibaro"
But to me he was
"Papa"

He often tells me stories of his time on this island
And it saddens him he cannot go back
I spend nights tossing and turning
Yet Aware it is a privilege in itself to have to feel the weight of what returning
back may look like
But even I fight the urge to leave everything behind and return to
My beautiful Borinquen

But home ....
The land of the valiant lord...
my island...
Has become restricted to me
Inaccessible unless for vocations
I dread every time I must leave
And return to life In the states

The land in which
we speak of revolution in whispers
Watch our children succumb to illness
Because language barriers
Are just as potent
Ammunition for those born killers

Poverty to reinforce
Our reality’s
A double-edged sword  
When breaking  
Our Rich Ports  
Touristic picture

They call us ungrateful because they feel as tho citizenship will ease their blows  
When  
The reality is  
We are children born from displacement

Beautiful for our culture  
But  
Undeserving when it comes to receiving aid  
And we are bodies that are worth more than Tax breaks  
More than your embargo treaties  
So pal carajo con todas las leyes Escritas por las manos de los gringos (del gobierno)  
Que no saben de lo que es ser Puertorriqueno

Thankful  
The young lords taught me “Solo el pueblo Salva al pueblo”  
And In these veins Runs the blood of generations of survivors Medicine women Young warriors And gifted scholars

Mami says  
Everything is el propósito de dios  
But I reminded her My people
Have bones built like sugar cane
Hearts like the gold pillaged from their island

This poem is for mothers
Who sent away their sons and daughter to the states to work
In hopes of then obtaining a better future
So they sent them off with shaking hands
And tear-filled prayers
Packed us bread and galletitas
In hopes that we will never lose taste of what home is

For the children
Scattered like sprinkled stardust
Across the diaspora and archipiélago
Relocation must be
Heavy-handed like mami when she’s cooking

Los poderosos
Who never turned their back on home
Because they know that no amount of light outs
Could ever put out
Their hope for a better future for their cuida
Porque los Puertorriqueños se quedarán
Siempre.

This is an ode
For the ones who still feel so far from home
Comeleones
Beautiful ever changing beings

Stuck in between
I don’t belong
And I long to be

Im exist to tell you it is safe here

We are the mezcla
The true definition of what America means
   They called us the melting pot
   But instead we gave them
      una clase de sopon
      A little bit of everything
      We fed them
      as often as they requested
      Until their stomachs hurt
   And then we’re blamed for the sickness

   They tell us
   The only way we can make it
   is to leave behind our rightful place
       And
   Live amongst those
   Not yet ready to hear our contributions to this nation.

   But
   Some days...
   Some days I imagine
   What our ancestors would say to me...
       To us...

   Can you hear it?
       Like a
   The fierce yet gentle whisper
   Hidden between the song of the coqui
       Lean in so you Can hear it?

   Can you hear me?

   I made you stronger than those moments
   I build your spine out of iron
       And lined each vertebrae
   With sapphire and jasper
       To remind you
   Do you hear me?
You come from a lineage of kings and kin of strong elders
I molded you with brown hands
From the very earth to remind you that all shades of blackness will always be worthy.
And when you fought me
On the day that you first seen light
I reminded you
You were here to serve a purpose.

So do you hear me warrior child? ...
Descendent of the wild woman
   First born child
   Of a hungry king
I wrote your prophecy with you
And placed it back within you
Lit candles full of affirmations
When you aren’t watching

So I hope you re read it
When folks who were sent to cross you
   No longer remain docile
   Cling to it
When proclaiming your place in this world
   And never remain doubtful.
   Cling to it
During moments in which you contemplate
Shattering the veil
Those are simply
   Moves
   Made
   Backwards
   Life?
Well my only advice,
   Is to cling to it.

Tap into me
Do not run from me
Fall into me
No...Do not jump for me
Stand tall for me
And pls
Do not abandon me.

For a life without our connection
Is a cycle lost to the matrix
A body dumped in the river
Of Colonization

Bori,
Never forget the smell of tu isla
Or the weight of our caracoles
In your necklace
For to be a child of borinken
Is to be a child born from exile
Yet forever protected by Atabeys blessings.

By
Mishie Serrano
“The In–Between Poetry”