

POETRY | SPRING 2017

Not Every Homemade Thing

By Katherine DiBella Seluja

To satisfy my therapist, I invite the Parkinsons to dinner.

“Secrets run deep in your DNA,” the biotech start-up convinced its 49 investors. I feel the secret in my blood. Not much of a secret really, it runs back more than three generations.

Easy to check your own Romberg, arms straight out, eyes closed, see if you feel the drift.

It shakes through the cottonwoods here. Trembling aspens know it in their veins. Whispers inevitable as magpies. I stumble over uneven flagstone, trip in the courtyard at midnight.

Parkinsons kids run the arroyo, in monsoon season and always on the Day of the Dead.

Insisting they prepare dinner, the Parkinsons make green chile stew, tortillas misshapen and uneven but sweet as the lard in my grandmother’s kitchen. Not every homemade thing has a name.

In the photo gallery: My grandmother on Dennis Hopper’s bike, my mother riding bareback with Tony, my aunt on the trail to *la morada*.

Hummers fly backwards and refuse to stop for a drink. At 5 o’clock we break out the liquids.

Hours to chop cilantro and onions. Arrhythmic clanging of wind chimes, sever the heads of salmon.

Stare into the mirror, test your own cranial nerves. Puff the cheeks, raise the eyebrows. Touch tip of tongue to roof of mouth. Grind those teeth. Shrug and shrug again.

We all need an emergency plan. Mine usually involves air.

On the bridge at Taos Gorge, hot lines run 24 hours; posters insist I’m not alone.

Katherine DiBella Seluja, who won the Southwest Writers Poetry award, is a poet and a nurse practitioner. Her work has appeared in American Journal of Nursing, bosque, Connotation Press, Crab Creek Review, Iron Horse Literary Review and Santa Ana River Review, among others. Her first collection of poetry, Gather the Night, is dedicated to her brother and focuses on the impact of mental illness. It is forthcoming from UNM Press in 2018. Katherine works as a pediatric nurse practitioner in Española, NM and as adjunct clinical faculty at the College of Nursing at UNM. She holds degrees in Nursing from Columbia and Yale University. Katherine is currently working on a collaborative poetry project in response to the 2016 presidential election.

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