Tita Aida

August 1, 1998 By Zamora Linmark

The Almighty: If the fever does not go away, fasten your seat belts, girlfriends, and wait for St. Jude to cross your legs. If he takes too long, sweep your thoughts together and call the hotline. No charge, girlfriends, and the voices you hear are real. Tell 'em about the chills, night sweats and runs you've been having. Open your palms and read to 'em the expeditions you took, how many, and where. Don't forget to mention any shipwrecks, perished pilots and moss growing on your skin. When those closet doors swung open and spit froze in our eyes, did we whimper and make a U-turn? No, girlfriends, we flexed our muscles and painted our nails suck-me violet. Then we took a blowtorch and burned the damn closet to thy kingdom come. Not my kingdom, but theirs, girlfriends, the ones over there with the jasmine crucifix and fornicating beards. The first few nights are always the hardest, girlfriends. The spiking fever, delirious lips, and skin so dry you could peel it off and make sandwich bags. But, like catechism and singles bars, you'll get used to it and begin to take it as it is without asking why no one comes up to you anymore and hands over a calling card with a name written in magic markers. You'll even learn how to float without tire tubes or air mats. So hang in there, girlfriends, and the vines will surely get to you. Grow your hair a few inches longer and you'll feel like Rapunzel, abandoned, but still waiting pretty. Remember: Think straight and the voices you hear are real. Don't wait too long for Jude because he might be on vacation and won't be able to find your lungs by the time he asks you to breathe deep and hold.

The Father: Stop calling me Dad because I stopped being your father ever since you sashayed out of this house in your ringlets and bobbypins and corset or whatever you call it. Fucking purple queer, all right. I can't even think right because everyone wants to know who put those goddamn spots between your ass. Don't look at me as if you never asked for it either because you had your ass all ready for anyone who tripped on your satin gown. Some satin trick. Think I didn't know what you were doing behind my back? Stop pretending that you're sorry, because you loved every goddamn minute of it. Should've been there when you had heaven groped so I could record it and play it for you over and over and over again. So stop giving me this drama crap and don't even dare think for a second that I'm gonna touch you. Won't need to. All I have to do is breathe on you and you'll be out of here. Look at this, finally make the front page and you had to share it with 100 other people. Front page with colored picture and all, they mixed you up with another guy and got your name spelled wrong. Even yakked about the first one. Conspiring under the mango grove with a married man. You make me sick with stories. So many and he had you fished out. If only you hadn't worn so much eye shadow and put on those plastic tits. You better shut up. Better yet, get up and go tell 'em how you invented everything. Put a map over your body and call 'em sacrifice. Get up, asshole, and show 'em how you stood in the dark and never got enough.

The Son: He is a picture spoiled by the rain that enters through the wooden slats. I remember his face when Mercy comes over for siesta to write the date and my name on the wall. Only three rusty nails, but so many thorns. When I go, forget pounding nails through these palms. Got enough blood jetting out from every hole of this body. Just tell me to spit and I'll fill up a milk bottle. Kiss the thorns goodbye because I got enough headache to last me for the afterlife. I wish I were Mercy, who's pumping-iron strong and used to lead when I wanted to cha cha cha the boring afternoon away. I don't dance anymore, gave up on the beat, threw my arms and legs to the monkey bar forever. I just swallow capsules and watch Mercy put numbers and words on the wall. When I go, she promised to paint my nails soft-shell red and dress me up in a beaded gown, my runaway gown, and pin a tiara made from mango leaves. I love Mercy. She even taught me how to peel the blue strips off the capsules and save them for souvenirs. They make fantastic ribbons. Indigo for rainy nights. Turquoise for summer solstice. Electric blue for fiesta dances. She keeps them in an old biscuit tin under the broken phonograph stand. When she wipes the siesta sweat off me and takes my temperature, I remember his face and Mercy starts to make up the past. Me in golden curls and pink muscle-T. Patty-cake, patty-cake, sores and shakes, nobody else but me. Cha cha, cha cha cha, it's flaming hot and nobody else but me. I love Mercy and think Mercy and she keeps her promise, soft-shell red because I remember the picture, indigo because it's a rainy night, mango-leaf tiara and a beaded gown. I pull my tongue out and tie tie the words and numbers around my tongue, indigo, and cha cha cha and tie tie tie and pull hard and tight, again and again and again for souvenir, baby, for souvenir.

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