



EMBODY

By Sossity Chiricuzio

Perspectives

Embody - In the small hours of the morning

by Sossity Chiricuzio, PQ Monthly

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My ancestors have been haunting my dreams.

There are ones I know, but also ones I don't recognize. Speaking the Sicilian I never learned, reading runes I can't translate, wearing faces only familiar in their pain or sorrow or laughter or rage. They want me to remember someone, or find something, or go somewhere. They want me to know who they are, or who I am.

The dreams are only tangentially realistic, and the way they play out is unsettling at best. Tasks made impossible by the lack of one small thing; houses that climb upward through too many floors; babies belonging to nobody but suddenly mine to guard or raise or save. Usually an enemy to hide from, to out run, to survive.

They end abruptly, leaving debris and questions in their wake like a storm. They blur into each other, changing pace and theme and cast until I suspect they must be a dream, but I fear the consequences of opting out. I keep trudging the unknown streets, carrying the unknown child, searching for the unknown item of vital importance.

How much of this is my internal anxiety, and how much what I absorb from the ferment all around us, is a math I can't work out. It feels like an examination of where we are by those who didn't make it to this particular moment of huge change and shattering loss. A cycle the world keeps repeating, but which feels increasingly weighted with all the times we failed to fix it yet.

The ancestors come to me, my dreams are full of questions and tasks, I wake still uncertain.

My high school sweetheart, who ran away from high school so he could come out as gay. Who went back in the closet so he could join the military because it was more secure than the streets. Who got kicked out when the closet didn't fit anymore. Who died of AIDS related complications in the company of a family who wouldn't even say his name. He visits me often these days.

I try to explain how things are now, how far we've come so quickly, and how close we are to sliding back one hundred years. How potent and powerful and helpless and hopeless we feel. How we are trying to grow into all that we can be, and scared of it, all at once. How we still don't have a common language. How we still adore each other. How we still tear each other down.

His face is fading, but his disappointment is clear.

I try to explain how the struggle to survive becomes ever more universal. How so many kinds of hate still stain everything we are trying to build. How that stain is still so often blood red. How we're all afraid we'll get left behind. How we sometimes can't stand to stay. How we are targets of ever increasing vibrancy in a world still selling the myth of normalcy.

He already knows that last part. The queer afterlife is very crowded lately.

My grandmother comes to me, despite her church. Perhaps it is only wishful thinking that she has shed the filters that made me an abomination rather than a beautiful warrior, but I lay my head upon her knee all the same. She doesn't joke about her vote canceling mine out. She doesn't take my photo down from the wall. She weaves me a shield the shade of our eyes and kisses my forehead.

She hands me the shuttle, but has me hold it like a sword.

The midwives come to me. The witches come to me. The crones of all genders come to me. The flames and stones and barred windows are reflected in their eyes. Also the beauty and possibilities, but harder to see. So many generations, so many centuries, and we still live under the heel of ego and profit and control. Still shaking defiant fists. Still fear running roughshod and cocksure over us.

Where I am and how I prepare for sleep seem to matter very little. This world is a nightmare generating machine.

In the small hours of the morning I wake myself and my sweetheart with a horrible shouting sob. My brain won't let me remember why. I find salt on my pillow every week. I sit up later, read more kids books, lay down a blanket of smoke thick enough to float away on and still. More salt. More sorrowful faces. More impossible tasks that are nonetheless absolutely vital.

The symbols that litter this landscape are cuttingly obvious. Piles of straightened coat hangers strewn across a room that reeks of no choices. Books made of ash and ignorance. White hands that fold as if in prayer but never wash clean. Trees made of wire where no apple will grow. Water that chokes and burns. Bones of every shape and size, stacked out to the horizon in monuments to greed and hate.

Is this an exact description of my dreams, and is such a thing even possible? I am only sure of the taste in my mouth, and the ache in my heart, and the knowing in my gut.

I am only sure that our collective consciousness is laboring to carry our collective sorrow. That even those that cry 'lies!' the loudest know we are killing everything around us. We are on the brink of extinction, or at least that of our souls. We have no more time to linger in the endless indulgence of self. My mind knows, asleep or awake, that the alarm is ringing sharply. It won't let me rest.

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