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Silver-Tongue Turned Gold

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Silver-Tongue Turned Gold

My mother's voice, is to some
A weapon.
She speaks with lilting English and orchestras
When she opens her mouth,
I see waterfalls
Great cerulean spills of champagne
And melodies made up of birdsong and sky
There is culture dripping off of my mother's tongue.
But this honeyed tone stings some like a thousand bees
As if its beauty itself offends them
As if her singsong lilt is a threat of war;
Deserving to be washed away with soap and rainwater.
My own voice is carefully constructed
Of perfect syllables, clean as glass
Draped with glittering baubles of English convention
I string poetry through my arms
And hide the honey of my culture between the folds of pretty words.
My mother laughs when she mispronounces words
Though her accent is a pretty, wondrous thing.
My mother does not ask me to trade in my English
For the golden, sparkling tones of her mother tongue
Instead, she tells me to cultivate my voice
Like a gardener cultivates roses
She tells me that English is my secret weapon.
That my pen is a sword, that my voice is a flame in my throat
And dragons live in my chest.
So I write forest fires and trails of blazing heat
I write of heat and thunder and my mother's golden voice
Till my throat and fingers are red and raw from dipping my mind into the sun.
I join the throng of voices around me that shout the same words:
"Hear me! Hear me, America!"
These words make me powerful.

So take heed to the chorus around you.
Be careful to listen to the hum
The thrum of voices that pulse through the ground
Ask for a chance to be heard.
They will preserve their flames in the presence of sea.
These war cries may fade into murmurs of shadow and broken vocal cords,
But these voices are still America.
Do not let them go to waste.

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11th Grade