

**Krystell Sanchez-Romero, East Broad Street School, fall 2016**



*I am a living, breathing irony. I am the nicest rude person you'll meet. I don't care about anything, but I stress over everything. I hate everyone, but I also love and care about everyone. I hate myself, but I'm also the most fabulous person I've met. Also, standing at 4' 11.6," I'm height-deficient. This makes for awkward hugs. Also, any kind of kitchen activity is a struggle. And I'm very spontaneous. Well, actually, I'm just a huge procrastinator, but I think "spontaneous" sounds less terrible. I want to be a writer, film director, or just a really cool adult. I will not become another 9 to 5-er. I think I'd be a husky if I were an animal. I'm a loner, but when I make friends, they're friends for life. I like being in the lead, but I don't like attention. I want to make sure all of my pack is safe, but I also have to watch out for myself. And, finally, I want to live on the moon. No particular reason, it just sounds rad.*

**Where I'm From**

Where I'm from is rectangular plot of land.  
On the far end, a gray cement.  
Gray and rough and unevenly spread,  
To the right, a second house, also gray, also rough,  
a window, another one, not exactly sure they were symmetrical.  
Next, "my" house, an orange box,  
no actual windows, more like frames.  
A beat up door and a layer of metal sheets for a roof.  
Loud rains in November.

And the very first house, a pale, faded blue, like an overexposed photograph,  
a house, two rooms on top, a *zotea*.  
Stairs next to it, littered with potted herbs  
caused by my grandmother and her green thumb.

Where I'm from is where my roots began to grow  
the same way that avocado in front  
of my house did.  
My grandfather planted it, it was small, it was growing, it was skinny, not-that-tall, it  
wasn't hard, or strong, fresh wood slowly getting thicker.

And once, *mi tio*  
bought an inflatable pool.  
We filled it up with a good  
seven people. All different shapes, all different sizes, most different ages,  
Once it existed, it now lies beneath another house.

Where I'm from there ONCE was an empty square.  
No longer there, a bitter pill to pass.  
It builds up emotions at the back of my throat.  
I push it down, repressing nostalgia the same way I repressed the tears when I fell and  
scraped my knee for the first time on the dirt row/passageway we used to play in.

The taste of dirt and sweat lingers on my tongue.  
The pink bubblegum with the tattoos and the anime stickers.  
*Cubitos de fruta with chile en polvo*  
*Totis y valentina* with lime juice.  
And at night, as fog settled in, the strong scent of coffee coming from my abuelita's  
house.  
*El panadero* passed by with his *canasta de bolillos* on his head riding an old bike.  
Coffee, the thing that brought us all together at the end of the night.  
And I remember struggling to get on that chair, being the youngest one in the family,  
everyone else already gathered around, as we discussed our day and the outside world.

Where I'm from is a pale blue house.  
Where I'm from is a rectangular plot of land.  
Where I'm from is a small town called Coscomatepec.  
Where I'm from is an overlooked state by the name of Veracruz.  
Where I'm from, we keep our home, tradition, and family close.  
Where I'm from, we learn to be strong.  
Where I'm from, we learn to not break, even as we face the violence on the streets, like  
under the poverty line  
Where I'm from, we're all *parientes*  
Where I'm from is a little country, a little bit broken, a little bit patched up.  
Where I'm from is Mexico  
And where I'm from made me strong.