

Pan de Sel(f)

An Offering of Bread and Story



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A Bread Offering of Self and Story

Brown on the outside

A soft sweet surprise

White on the inside

I was made to rise.



Two
Five
yet not one

Warm water,
check.
envelopes of yeast.
minutes it rises, and
priest.

But without Flour

or the flow of magic blue



sprouts of our soil will no rising
do.

Measured, levelled

a paved paradise.

Where
would the wheat
grow?

Portugal,
Spain.

Brown on
the outside,
simple,

plain.





Separated,
broken, never
to be the
same.

But,
value there is
in trusting a
process even
if by flame.

But who
would trust
something
broken and
torn?

Like a
Brownie
before the

Girl Guide, a tree bark in early Spring,

“Look to what’s next,” said the feather of a wing.



Now mixed in with new friends:
Sugar, Flour and twins Fatty and
Fat,

Yoke surrendered to a whirlwind
and never looked back.

From schoolyard to main street,
"Brown, yellow, short, small,"

The names meant to shrink me,
I've heard them all.

But then there was Water, a friend both soft and firm.

Life giving, shape shifting,
wherever I turn.

Not brown, yet plain
and the source of all life
quenching my thirst
my relief during strife.

The whirlwind broke Yoke,
But little did she knead.
After a few loving pats,
before the hot stones' heat.

Brown on the outside,
a soft sweet surprise.
Light brown, not exactly white
inside.

The heat! The
heat!

Oh, what a
surprise.

To arrive in
November snow,

a joke God
devised.

Still,



all mixed together, we did rise.

Rise from lower class to middle class,
analogy aside.

Together again,

we became a new kind of
whole,

a different kind of family,
another way to roll.

Sorry, pun intended.

Pilipinos have no shame

when it comes to word play.

No one escapes getting a silly nickname.

Like me, my name Janice, an elaboration of Jane

Pandesal originated elsewhere,

in this way we are the same.

What might have been

if we had remained,

on the islands we had stayed,
in the heat of Taytay's tropical rains?
If Magellan never landed,
What did we eat before Spain's reign?
Would I know this bread of salty sweet,
or write this poem of her-story?



The wheat of bread
would have stayed in
Europe.

And my being here may
have not developed.

I don't know.

And happy I don't.

What's sure...

What I know...

I write here to show

Balikbayan I am,

returning to origins, I grOW.

Growing with curiosity,
with hopes for lasting change.
Might the broken shell that birthed poor Yoke
possibly be rearranged?
At least the whites of her eggs
I know can still be used.
A souffle, an omelette,
oh dear chickens,
what we gain, you must lose

I love Filipino foods but so many dishes need killing.
A pig, a chicken, and fish to fry
Sorry, I'm just not willing
This pan de sel(f) can rise
above the Catholic shame
a panacea evangelized
indigenuity to blame?

"Who do you think you are? You think you're better than us?

Just because you go to school," Mom said,

hand on hip, eye-brows raised

a valid, loyal fuss.

Her rightness didn't make me wrong,

disagreements born of diversity

I never thought I'd stay so long

in school, especially university

I wanted to be a house wife

baking for husband, four children too,

not because mom was one, no

I simply saw the joy in making a home

a place where We nurtures Me

and what works for me is services for two.

Sometimes brown on the outside
More accurately, hues of sand and pink
Comfortable with differences
broken shells, emotions, stories to think.

I didn't marry early
So, here
I write,
finding my own way
poetically, narratively,
academically
astray.

Encountering a gap, oceans wide
migration divides
The Filipino language tells me,
we needn't take sides.

No binaries,
of gender at least,
there is no "He" or "She"
suggesting that the importance
is neither You nor Me.

To indicate a subject
simply use the word "Siya"
ambiguity is the flavour
of this Canadian-Filipina

That's right, you heard me
I ain't droppin' that one
I may be a Canadian citizen
but I was made in Luzon.

The versatile Pan de sel(f)
a reflection of me
brown on the outside
best warmed, with tea.
Transported for a better life,
adapted by land and locals
made of water and earth,
our whole more than our total.

When you have a pandesal
you may think of this -
families not yet together
praying for those they miss.
Or may you see islands,
like an ink blot in the great Pacific blue
as if God had an unsteady hand,
unsure of what to do.

Or better yet, call your own
loved ones far or near
uphold love
rising
hope
like bubbles
bursting with cheer.