

Poems by

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Lessons

You taught me lessons that your mother taught you.

one If you want man to look at you, shake hips enough to
make him look at you.

two If man pounces on you like a rabid animal, blame those
hips you shook too much.

three pleasure comes from man. they are the fruit we must eat.

four forbidden fruit is forbidden. men are the fruit we must eat.

five man will become husband. do not upset the animal.

six bear the animal's children.

seven pray for no daughters

eight weep for your daughters

The Inheritors

I

You told me that only god can revive the dead, so
why do you whisper words soft as silk to the ones
who
sleep?

Talk to me. Talk to me, instead. Your words do
not have to be flowers. I will take fists. Just look
at me long enough, so I know that you are not
dead.

II

graveyard home. silent suffering. will we die
here? darkness makes you afraid. i will make

myself open-casket for you. crawl into me. this holy womb is yours to keep. *but my burden will kill you*, she whispers. oh mother, you cannot kill me. i was already dead.

III

god does not remember you. he left you in the cellar of the forgotten. he let you become the mother of the ones who will be forgotten. i wanted to heal you, prayed foolishly to a god who does not answer. but i already knew. my hands are not holy. they only destroy.

IV

Do not be afraid of the day when I leave, she whispers in soft spanish tongue. I want to hold you, but you don't smell like sweet bread anymore. You reek of hurt, of unfamiliar things that do not belong to me. I am a selfish creature, but I must let you go. You do not belong to me. You must leave for the both of us. To show me that your pain does not belong to me.

Sacrilege

i.

Your womb carried this body that is not woman enough, but burden enough to make you question god. *he does not punish*; you have always said. So ask him why he forsakes us? Send him your blood curdling screams, forget prayer. Curse his name, say it in vain, drag it through the mud. Burn down the cross That you carry on your back. Say that you will not carry your daughter like a Cross on your back. You will not be a martyr for the wicked one, confused one, the half-Jota of a daughter who made you believe that she was the straightest one.

Can you not love me like this, half-broken? Take these words with two good hands, and show *Him* how you suffer.

i.

The man in the confessional booth said to take my hands and purify them with salt-water. I licked them clean. god cannot make me holy.

i

I almost died last night, I tell her.

Father locks himself in the bathroom. Knees make contact with tile. *Crack.*
Is this how men take responsibility?

Mother's glass shatters in her hand. *Crack.* She wants to shatter my head. I
call out for her to stay. Her bloody mess keeps me company.

I almost died last night, I tell myself.

i

I wondered all this time if you ever sat down at the kitchen table
to think about all the bad, you have left in this world. You were always
the devil in the flesh. The untouched child of god that brought misery
to the holiest of homes. They said that you never went up to receive
communion. Was that true? I can't remember anymore. I try to visualize
you with this bad head of mine, and it all goes blank. This battered body
still tries to protect me and keep me alive, even when I fight against it. I tell
you that I do not believe in anything. *No seas dramatica, cabrona,* he says.
You never made me go to church after that. Pa, was the guilt stronger than
your fear of God?

i.

Burn me like a sin. Watch as my body turns into ashes. The womb weeps
for the child it lost.
god weeps
for the child that is lost.

i.

You taught me that healing takes practice,
precision.

Meticulous burning of
the skin. You say to be brave. Kill
what tried to kill me. I was never a dying
animal.

You brush my hair in gentle strokes. You
bathe me in precious oils. Your fingers
perform a delicate dance on my
skin.

I close my eyes and learn. Healing can
only come from our sacred
hands.

