Girl, Age 6

Maura Sands
Western Michigan University, maura.e.sands@wmich.edu

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Available at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol16/iss1/26

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Mercado nro 1 de Surquillo

Tía Diana fills her bag with strawberries, mangos, lúcuma, and a pineapple. Fuchsia cracks, I want her to lick the pink off her teeth. Tarantulas hide in between bananas; occasionally, falling into baskets of purple corn, limes, and carrots. She haggles over bruised potatoes.

Around the corner, lomo saltado on a street cart. Sirloin and onion sweep through the market, spicy. We walk to the butcher’s to buy beef heart.

Chickens hang by their feet, plucked and ready to be boiled. The fattest roosters have been sliced open, but their stomachs, livers, and intestines remain intact. A severed pig’s head side-eyes customers as the butcher weighs our meat.

She gives me slab of pomegranate muscle to hold. It sinks into my palms like a cold ball of clay. In crinkled paper, blood organs soak. Tonight, her dogs will fight over the last piece of cartilage.

Under the blue sky, a brown-eyed girl begs strangers for soles. She is barefoot, and I wonder if the hot pavement hurts her feet. There is nothing I can give her, because this heart does not belong to me.

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The terrain of brains topography to a map. Broken oceans slip away leaving a tide pool oasis, the microscopic life, dances and sways in the seawater, plays salty children. Silverfish slip through fingers but details get lost, in synapses that are stunted. The neurons breaking but the sea-urchin still swims. Tiny feet splashing in the puddle. Rain on my mermaid face. Once, I squished my toes in the mud in the sunken part of my driveway that built up a sea when it stormed and I squirmed in my swimsuit patterned with metallic fishes, but the month, the goose-bumps, the giggles I couldn’t swallow, all crawl back into their rocky crevices. The tree in my backyard started as a sprout fed from the concrete reservoir. It sprang up from the solid center and stretched towards heavy clouds, fell down into the earth with roots searching for pockets of laughter until leaves could not find the oxygen, and branches became brittle with forgetfulness and the core was soft like old apples pulling fistfuls of rotten wood from my heart.