

Poems

by Alejandra Estrada*

Drawings by Sebastián Álvarez**

Embroidery by Macarena de Arrigunaga***



12:05

My vague body, agonizing and off balance, was hurled to the earth precisely at a broken midday. Someone could have swaddled me in kraft paper and sold me at the butcher's. Someone could have cast me to the ravenous dogs barking outside the hospital. Someone could have given me —whole or in pieces— to the doctors in training at the university, or sold me to the freak show.¹ But fifty grams saved me from the incubator. My purple body, premature and pre-dead, decided to breathe. My mother birthed a defect.

¹ A bearded woman in the twenty-first century. There aren't any freak shows anymore, but hirsutism is still around. They called me a beast and beat my heart. They called me bitch, wolf, ape. They called me a monster. I started combing my face, legs, belly, and neck. My words came out in knots. Skeins grew within me, stringing out my thousand-Rapunzel braids, and I, a brief body, swollen with adolescence, cried because I was a flower of hair who wished to be touched by the mouths of men.

* Poet; samamorada@hotmail.com.

** Visual artist; @sebastianalvarez.jpg.

*** Writer; @macarenadearrigunaga.

RAPUNZEL

or

A Brief Treatise on Trichotillomania

Rapunzel weaves a rug with hair.

She can't remember the world after the tower,
can't remember cars,
or dresses,
can't remember the trolley's path
or the scent of damp earth,
can't remember her own voice.

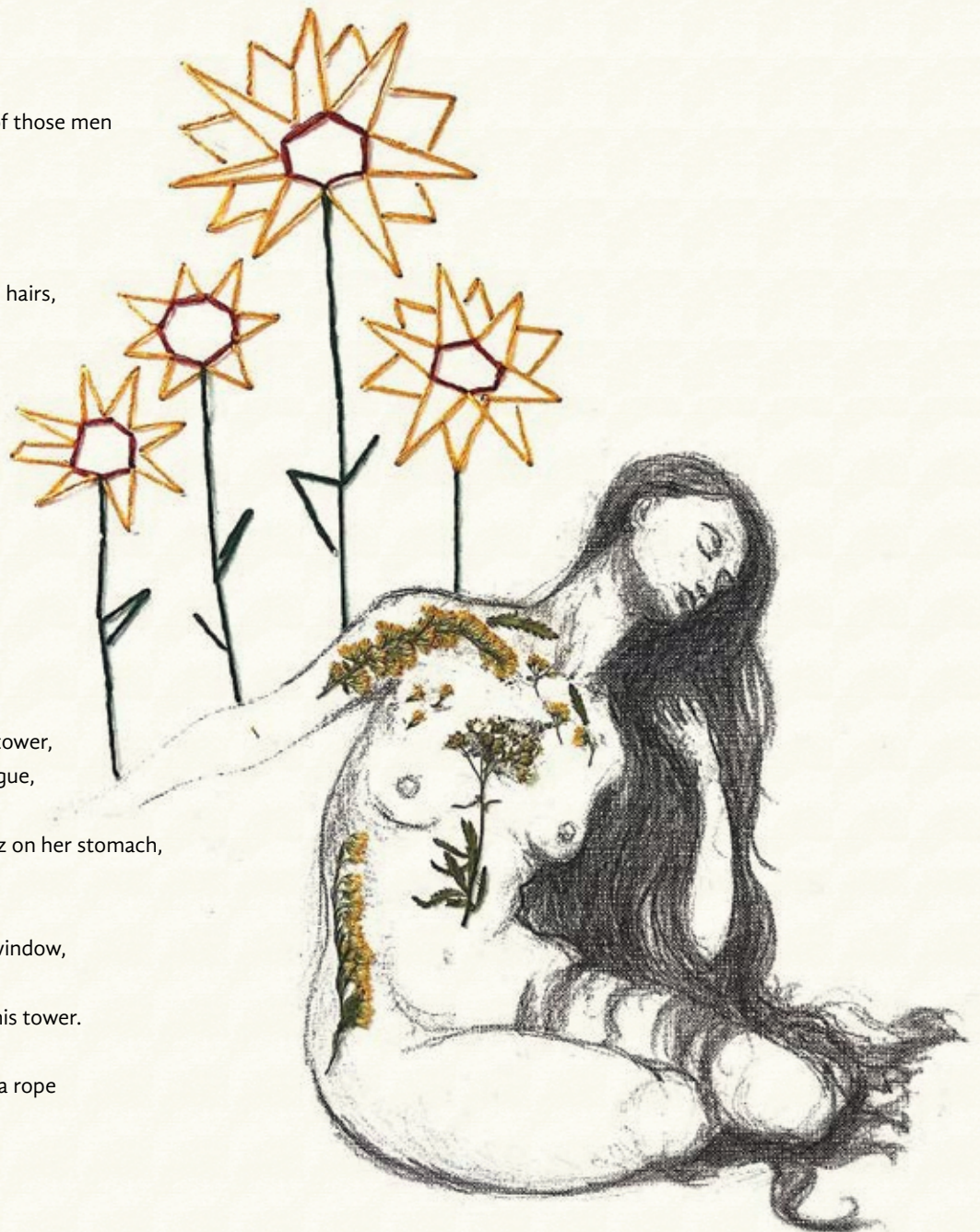
She can only remember the smell of those men
who snatched her on her path
that afternoon.

Rapunzel weaves her mane:
she plucks one, two, three hundred hairs,
yanks out the telephone cable,
the leaves off her plants,
the fur on her cat,
the clothesline.
She tears off her clothes
and again, her tresses
in pairs:
two, four, six, eight hundred.

Rapunzel weaves an oblivion rug
in the quiet of the fourth floor,
apartment 5A,
and no one knows the path to the tower,
because Rapunzel tore out her tongue,
her eyebrows, and lashes.
Rapunzel lights a pyre with the fuzz on her stomach,
her bed is barren.

And only one shape will cross the window,
only one phrase will open it,
and it won't be flesh penetrating this tower.

Thread by thread, Rapunzel braids a rope
for her throat.



|

Mother wanted a doll but birthed a stone. Mother wanted a quiet doll but must bear my birdlike tongue. Mother wanted a quiet doll in a pink dress: my drying rack is laden with black lace. Mother wanted a quiet doll, with a pink dress, who would stay put on her pillow in bed.

Mother is still waiting for me to make my way home at dawn one day.





||

Mother would knit a hymen for me,
my hair,
my mouth,

my eyes...

Knot
after

knot,
mother knit
a chain
of silence. ■■■

