

Jan Conn

THE FLOWER CARRIERS

for my sister Diane Conn

In Chapultepec Park a hundred coffins ride on the green bronze backs of Botero's beautiful horses, followed by weeping widows.

On some lips *El Día de los Muertos* is like the taste of honey.

Why we are here is not a question that preoccupies the beggars along the streets in the *Zona Rosa*. The flower sellers were deified by Diego Rivera but he only painted them on their knees. They haven't yet learned to rise.

I could buy a thousand faces of Frida Kahlo and a pet monkey and wake up with white calla lilies instead of eyes.

River made of moonstone, of obsidian, of salt.
Mist with its small ivory noise.
The death of the sun: on this day the volcano will erupt
and the rain god ride down from the sky
on the coiled tails of rattlesnakes.

No, I'm not dreaming. My sisters and I are the four directions of the compass rose, each one assigned a color and a road to follow to the Temple of the Moon.

© In the mirror the transvestite sees not his elegant flowered dress or his scarlet nails, but his necklace of tiny skulls interspersed with demons, too heavy to fly. The face behind the face in the mirror we confront daily.

As I was saying: here is this empty life. Fill it
with rain and flowers, a feathered coyote disguised
as a comet leaving a trail of hairless dogs
and chihuahuas to populate the valley of Mexico.

When I was here at 25 it was like this: the middle of April,
jacaranda trees spilling purple blossoms
onto the sweaty shirts of shoeshine boys in the plaza.

Ahead of me in the crowd at the anthropology museum
I see that younger self. I place gold frogs in my ears
and it begins to rain. I refuse to pray
but angels hear me.

We have found answers but are lost, looking
for the questions. *Is fuchsia?* A question Diego
might have asked Frida when they traveled
on a crowded bus with their arms full
of flowers and loaves of bread, and little daggers,
in the form of kisses.

Everything arrives too late except in the movies,
like a lover one wanted years ago who visits unexpectedly,
a little ruffled, with apologies and a good bottle of wine.

Across the night sky streak pencil-thin forks of lightning;
a girl is hit and struck dumb. Now not even the weather
is a safe topic.