

The Making of a Self Portrait

walk on that very thin white line sweetie

Pure white walkways

Stay off dangerous dirt roads

uncharted, missing labels

you'll lose your way if there're too many choices sweetie

razor party in the bathroom

the birth of a morning ritual

small smiles sprout to see

stainless

gleaming

skin

below jungles of foliage

only a raised eyebrow at the destruction of

protective layers

and later heavy grief

to watch all the pieces of me wash down a drain

ten years later

dye poured down a sink

excess pigment

that belongs on someone else's head

it lacks my essence

fails to capture my
Image

Idea

(who made this self portrait?)

blood flows down drains
heavy with my story
green and purple pulses full of fuel and fire
floating into a draining universe
a shrinking box that I don't fit in
warning as soon as it hits the surface –
rotating siren

no chance to begin an unnecessary race
no new labels in a world full of
phony ideas
stuck.

Just follow the white line sweetie

In a phone on a screen on a lifestyle page
emulate a woman I'll never know
configure
reconfigure
recalculate
act like I'm a damn machine
And not the woman I am

I was just skipping, which wasn't enough
Turned into a race

I just wanted pen and paper, which wasn't enough
aimed for the Olympic medals instead

what is a poet going to do?
what does a poet have to say?
sometimes all I can hear are his words on replay
I thought I could change the world too when I was your age
sometimes I don't know where my words begin
where do his end

unexpected la rains and long isolated walks
school strikes and kindergarten talks
College classes and yogic meditation
pandemic closures and home experimentation

I've arrived

a moment full of pitiful irony
the world has slowed
given us back Time
I contemplate my
 Patience
 Silence
 Stripped wisdom

I forfeited when asked
gave up my only weapon

they know what I did not
our ability to break through lines
damage small boxes that never contained us

eternal dedication to stand as a monument against
their *Declaration of What a Woman Ought to Be*

I've become

homegrown

Took back what was stripped

away

Carried along by those who stepped off the white line first
who radiate their natural light

on our dreams

opened doors that had been locked and hidden

I say without

remorse

or nostalgia for things passed

they never knew

not a damn clue

what I'd become