

# Sardines

I ate a can of sardines with rice today,  
For the first time in 7 years (since I left my country)

I sat down alone in my kitchen  
with a pair of metal  
fork and spoon.  
Placed neatly on white cloth  
In my kitchen,  
door shut,  
windows closed.

I grabbed the edge of the can,  
My palm rested against the metal stacked rings,  
and popped its top.

I looked down to my knees,  
I see a pool of red soil,  
With bodies of sardines swimming in the ring

In my hand, the side of metal can, is labelled  
“Ligo: in tomatoes sauce chilli added sardines”  
And how can I not remember: I once fell in love with the sea.

But why now,  
A sea is  
in a palm of my hand,  
Inside a precious metal can,  
But why do I  
don't feel love or lust.  
?

But how  
now,  
Red is a my favourite colour,  
Sardine has a shiny silvered skin,  
But today I found  
them to be,  
Embarrassingly,  
And Almost,

Too ugly.

Their taste, also,  
weren't so pretty,  
Their flavour is not sweet,  
Or salty,  
or sour  
or bitter.  
I can't even feel the taste of the ocean water.

With disappointment, I asked myself  
—What happened to my pacific blue shade of home ?

On my journey, finding my way home,  
i see a sign that says:  
“product of the Philippines.”  
The Philippines? Is it my home? (no, my birth place is Thailand)  
And my sea? My island?  
(there are so many places out there)

And I keep asking— but what about all my seven seas?

....Salted rivers stream down my cheeks,  
I can still recall  
my great love  
for the sea.  
I can still remember:  
The joy of walking on the sand bare feet,  
The scent of salted seaweed,  
The softness of cold waves break my skin,  
The sun that burn my melanins,  
(But, in exchange, gifted me rich melatonin)

However, I thought  
As an alone swimmer  
little sardine like me,  
How can I find my people  
when I think I am swimming in the wrong sea ?

But how could that possibly be?  
All the seven seas shared the same stream.  
Salt water circulate, evaporate, and corporate  
It is all,

just a one-old-goddamn sea.  
And we are all one big giant family.

White rice and sardine,  
Beige sand and blue sea;  
This can of sardines,  
Is also my people.  
My home,  
My place,  
My culture  
My country.

And for others,  
Fellow courageous strong willed  
Silvered sardines,  
May the West has never taken  
The saltiest of your sea.  
Never let your sardines  
Loss your flavour  
You may maintain your own taste;  
No one's sardine taste nothing like me

Never let yourself get lost in sea  
Neither should you lost your net,  
Packs of sardines,  
while you swim to the western land.

On my white clothed kitchen table,  
With stainless steel spoon and fork,  
I eat my white rice with canned tomato sardines.  
And to my dear other friends,  
whose your favourite childhood meal were chocolate chip cookies, sourdough glazed rings, or  
sugar powdered pancakes.  
Please remember that mine  
was just a plain,  
old,  
cheap  
can of tomatoes sardines

Do I still feel ugly?  
Does the fish disgust me?  
I don't care.

I am at home, happy, on my own,  
Eating my very own can of tomato sardines.