

The True Price: Letter of a Trafficked Maid

Dear Mistress,

My dreams were taller than a skyscraper,
ambition larger than the pristine bay.
From the bondage of poverty, I desired escape.

“For 100 dollars,”
A man hollered.
“Success will come to you, my friend.
There, the riches will never end.”
So I signed the contract for his ticket,
not knowing it was the sales receipt labeled “me”.
And I sailed away to the big city from the pearly shore,
leaving my dreams there forevermore.

--So tell me ma'am, how much are my aspirations truly worth?

I arrived into an apartment high above the ground,
where I was met with you, my employer, the Mistress.
This was where my future lied--
an iron cage with a family of five.

Mopped the kitchen, washed the clothes,
fed the children and ate alone.
I swept, and swept, and swept,
until finally, I wept.
If this was success, then I refused to accept it.
Every waking moment my head screamed with screeching mutiny,
“Mistress I am leaving. I am suffering, can't you see?”

What a childish fantasy.
Who would believe me?
You, the Mistress, now owned my name, my nationality, my face.
My passport you held under lock and key,
made people like me unable to be traced.

--So tell me ma'am, how much is my identity truly worth?

Between the kitchen and nursery stood a storage room,
of which I am forever confined.
My companion was a small window into the streets below,
where girls roam without a care in the world.
I also want to be free, free to be youthful, free to be me.

What a childish fantasy.
Who would believe me?

Given one uniform to wear throughout the week,
my personalized golden necklaces, silver earrings, tailored shimmering dresses,
laid confiscated by you.
“The Maid” was my name, nothing more, nothing less.
I had no voice, no color, no chance to control the fate of today or the next.

--So tell me ma'am, how much is my individuality truly worth?

On the days you were away,
“Please don’t let the husband touch me,” I often prayed.
What a childish fantasy.
Who would believe me?
Hawk like eyes roamed my body,
a poisonous touch ensued.
This time I ran away from the assault,
only to tumble down the steps,
and my body fell apart.

You paid for the doctor:
a fixed arm for hundreds,
a leg for a few more.
But no doctor could cure the misery and trauma that I excruciatingly bore.

--So tell me ma'am, how much is my body truly worth?

To answer quite simply for you ma'am:
I was never equivalent to any money.
There is no price on humanity,
no discount on morality.
People are not for sale;
freedom and justice should not be a fantasy.
Those are universal rights held by all-
by both you and me.

Because ultimately
any price for a trafficked worker, maid, or body paid,
is transaction that should've never been made.