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# Daughter of India | rockstar, revisited | We Left Texas on Cinco de Mayo

Silke Feltz

Silke Feltz is an assistant teaching professor in the first-year composition program at the University of Oklahoma. Some of Silke's poems have been published in *Drunk Monkeys*, *Peeking Cat Poetry*, *Drift*, and *Child Owllet Literary Magazine*. She earned her PhD in Rhetoric, Theory & Culture at Michigan Technological University and her research focuses on the rhetoric of veganism and educational interventions of veganism. In her spare time, Silke manages *StreetKnits*, a humanitarian knitting charity that donates handmade projects to the homeless in Oklahoma.

## Daughter of India

*Bombay, December 2012*

Sweet crow, my lonely friend,  
drawing secretive lines into  
a torn-up sky and guarding this cricket  
field swollen with grapes of men.  
Puzzled eyes— cricket games disturbed.  
Tension lies between me and them.  
Elephant or tiger, what will you be?

*Lap One*

Three men, playing barefoot on burnt soil.  
Jobless, always womanless outside. I'm  
dodging by speed walkers in dusty,  
brown sandals, sweating out muffled lunch  
break steam. A pack of kids, wild spirits,



### Keywords

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playing with a makeshift ball as if there  
was no tomorrow and tomorrow really might not—  
Only my running shoes touch their ground as  
we all stare. We wonder. We silently judge.

*Lap Two*

A couple of women appear in intricate silk saris.  
Relief when they offer a smile—warmth.  
My raised hand greets their kindness.  
The barefoot men focus on the  
game again. More relief. Beads of sweat on  
my forehead, my brow has left. Reaching a corner  
as the kids' ball almost hits my head.  
Did they intentionally aim it at me?

*Lap Three or Four*

Racing heart, steady and fast. People  
don't matter anymore.  
Sandals.  
Saris.  
Stares.  
In my world. Angry German  
punk rock yelling in my ears until I get hit  
on the shoulder by the makeshift ball.  
I catch it and life stops abruptly. Silence on the field.  
Tiger or elephant?  
The ball sleeps in my confused palm until I throw it  
back. Now, the bundle of middle  
school boys starts to giggle uncontrollably.

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Friends, not foes.

My fingers form the peace sign. Ear-to-ear smiles.

*Lap Five*

Two men appear. Surprise. Great

gear, strong legs. Fellow runners.

They come closer, heart beats faster and I

run harder because now we're in a race,

an unapologetic race between them and me,

a race that really started in my head

two rambunctious weeks ago on a bus in Delhi.

What will we be, elephant or tiger?

## rockstar, revisited

so we're standing here just like seventeen years ago  
at three a.m. in my parents' courtyard we consider to part  
I can taste the wind on your nose— this is our final show

as my boots shuffle impatiently through virginal snow  
I know what's on your beating mind— a new start  
while we're standing here just like seventeen years ago

your lips sound familiar but the scent of your bass pillow  
plays nightclub images that will always keep us apart  
I can taste the wind on your nose— this is our final show

midnight picnics baby love and coincidental sorrow  
brought out the best and the worst in each other's art  
we're standing here just like seventeen years ago

and I dance into your song twirling around your shadow  
while you whisper how mature I am how sensual and smart  
I can taste the wind on your nose— this is our final show

you will always be my favorite stumble my famous typo  
in song lyrics that remind me of my young and clumsy heart  
so we're standing here just like seventeen years ago  
and I can taste the wind on your nose— this is our final show.

# We Left Texas on Cinco de Mayo

We left Texas on Cinco de Mayo, my death dolls neatly packed away

like fading 6th Street memories of mild Novembers past.

Numb mouth. My dentist's Texas twang still ringing in my ears,

reassuring me that life in the fierce Northwoods would be fine.

A year earlier, my love swiftly swam out of our life.

Every man has a price. A new job winked, so he left his wife.

I stayed him, but he came back and packed me up,

like another moving box, and we left Texas for good

on that steamy Monday when the sun relentlessly

floated in her blinding peak. We didn't share one

last taco or meaningful words because nothing

remained ashore. Ambition washed away our core.

The dog was drowsy from surgery that morning.

Wobbly on our feet and with swollen tongues, we entered

Oklahoma's bleeding earth. My friend's husband

slept with a stripper 'round here right before

her breast cancer said hello. The stripper

swiftly moved into their house;

a tight ass on your couch during chemo.

We left Texas on Cinco de Mayo, my death dolls neatly packed away

so they wouldn't break as well. I imagined their cackling faces when

we passed peaceful cattle in between burnt pastures in Kansas;

witnessing the cows' last station on our way to a new one.

In Iowa, we stopped because of the bridges of

Madison County. He said he really wanted to

show me what they looked like, but he didn't

even leave the car. Solemn steps took me  
towards a bridge that crookedly stood still.  
Strong, sullen wood kept it complete.  
I took a picture and smiled.  
We left Texas on Cinco de Mayo and arrived twenty-five hours  
and one-thousand-six-hundred-and-two miles later.  
A peninsula I didn't even know existed.  
A place so small you easily miss it on the map.  
The numbness had left my tongue, but I said nothing.  
Only our dog, who saw snow for the first time,  
jumped into winter's stubborn patch of white  
with her brave, foolish heart.