

**Autobiography of A Nuyorican**  
*for Lela*

Half blue, feet first  
she battled into the world,  
hardly surviving the blood cord twice wrapped,  
tense around her neck, hanging.  
Womb pressing, pushing,  
pulling life from mother's child.  
Fragil flesh emerging perfect in blueness,  
like the lifeline that sustained her,  
yet limp, almost a corpse.

Her mother claims the virgin interceded.  
Invoked through divine promise, in prayer,  
that caused her dark eyes to open,  
her tongue to taste air like fire,  
as the blueness faded, tracing death  
on the tail of an eclipse.

And as in birth from her darkness,  
the free-giving sun inched slow to visibility,  
revealing all color and form,  
a great teacher,  
generous and awesome,  
silent and reverent,  
loud and blasphemous,  
constant,  
sculpting edges of definition  
in the shadow and light of multiple universes.

Half blue, feet first  
she battled her way.  
The world did not want another brown,  
another slant-eyed-olive-Indian-Black-child.  
Did not want another rainbow empowered song  
added to repertoire in blue, or azure, or indigo,  
or caribbean crystal.  
Did not want another mouth to feed,  
especially another rock-the-boat poet,  
another voice opened wide,  
fixed on a global spectrum of defiance.

The meaning of war defined her.  
Gasping and innocent,  
before she knew her mother,  
before she discovered herself.  
Barely alive.  
Gathering weapons into her being  
with each breath that filled her.  
Growing stronger.  
Determined to beat all the odds.

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