

I SING THE BODY WEST HOLLYWOOD

Lights twinkling, swanky, wrinkled penthouse delirium embedded in cactus hills, high heels ablaze, steam from heated motel pools rising to kiss the night air, I sing the body West Hollywood where I met my moonlight, my calm, waiting for me here all along waltzing the Boulevard lined with fierce boys, transgender trailblazers, warrior women, rainbow logos on cop cars, sun glowing through the canyons, hugging the curves of Route 66 all before breakfast. West Hollywood you count the beats of my heart. Poker nights and speedo-clad future husbands meet in warm rooms bet on happily ever-afters, and for the first time I don't feel different. Drinking Michelob at the 4Star – Don't Ask Don't Tell – nights you took the trolley home, shoe scuffs moist, how did I get from the Sunset Strip to Westwood without losing

My sanity or my clothes, sounds of memories being made to forget outside my window, boom, pulse of the city where I come to search for zebras, sift through racks of dusty florescent vintage gowns, where everyone I know doesn't fit anywhere but here where Pee-Wee Herman threw Tootsie Rolls at the audience at the Roxy, body West Hollywood where my voice can be heard, drunk on books, palm trees, art, comedy, food, blood of other freaks like me. "I Will Survive." I used to wonder why I couldn't find myself then I realized I was never lost -- one city, one pride, voguers, drag queens piling into the street, swimming through a pool of books as David Hockney stands near by with a towel, air lighter here, where Paul McCartney stopped traffic at Book Soup happily signing anything handed to him

Departing The Hudson with Michelle, teetering on stilettos, reveling in our fresh freedom, 7-Eleven bums gawking as we clear out the entire stock of Lunchables, 20-somethings cloaked in the velvet glow of the west as the hairy guy rides his bike down Santa Monica wearing only a lime green thong, yes, Tower Records my church, Gold Coast my karaoke paradise, work is time to play, I feel home, I feel safe, place park, hang, tacos years before the big blue whale. Fire at Micky's, poets lines ablaze just sayin' I'm reppin' my gayborhood, headlights lining the boulevard like iced lace, will always remember when, and can never forget now: Orange Grove, chain-smoking with a German I met in Malaysia, flowered pants, manic stocking capped dog walkers, I sing the body West Hollywood because it lets me color

Outside the lines, my Russian neighbor is my friend, air sweet with imagination, dreams grow on trees, penguins, reindeer, candy and sausage, found a rock in Plummer Park a creation living inside, we sing as gas lamps burn . . . there's a fog upon L.A. and my friends have lost their way while at the top of my house, the rain is loud, sweeps the roof in waves, strong, then soft, then strong. Rain was the soundtrack of my life. Where I'm from, it rains. Rain there is like sunshine here. The sky would be bright blue, clear all the way to forever, then rain. I loved it. Still do. West Hollywood its hills, skinny sidewalks, cafes, seniors, heroes, sightseers, freedom seekers, treasures, my city with a small town feel. I sing the body West Hollywood: my past, present & future.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED LINES TO MAKE THIS POEM POSSIBLE!

I Sing the Body West Hollywood, an homage to Walt Whitman, is a collaborative poem using lines from residents of and visitors to West Hollywood, weaved together by West Hollywood City Poet Laureate, Kim Dower: www.kimdowerpoetry.com

For more info on the West Hollywood City Poet Laureate program, managed through WeHo Arts, please visit: <http://bit.ly/wehocitypoet>



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