

Martín Espada

Mad Love

No one wants to look at pictures of Puerto Ricans, Frank.
--Cornell Capa

My brother said: *They harvested his corneas.* I imagined
the tweezers lifting the corneas from my father's eyes,
delicate as the wings of butterflies mounted under glass.
I imagined the transplant, stitches finer than hair,
eyes fluttering awake to the brilliance of an open window.

This is not a horror movie. This is not Peter Lorre in *Mad Love*,
the insane and jealous surgeon grafting the hands of a killer
onto the forearms of a concert pianist, who fumbles with the keys
of the piano, flings knives with lethal aim, *Moonlight Sonata*
swept away by lust for homicide, his wife shrieking.

The blind will see like the captain of the slave ship who turned the ship
around, voices in the room will praise the Lord for the miracle, yet
the eyes drinking light through my father's eyes will not see the faces
in the lens of his camera, faces of the faceless waking in the darkroom:

not the tomato picker with a picket sign on his shoulder that says
Reagan Steals from the Poor and Gives to the Rich; not the fry-cook
in his fedora, staring at air as if he knew he would be stomped
to death on the stoop for an empty wallet; not the poet in a beret,
grinning at the vision of shoes for all the shoeless people on the earth;
not the dancer hearing the piano tell her to spin and spin again;
not the gravedigger and his machete, the bandanna that keeps the dust
of the dead from coating his tongue; not the union organizer, spirits
floating in the smoke of his victory cigar; not the addict in rehab gazing
at herself like a fortuneteller gazing at the cards; not the face half-hidden
by the star in the Puerto Rican flag, the darkness of his dissident's eye.

Now that my father cannot speak, they wait their turn to testify
in his defense, witnesses to the mad love that drove him to it.