

Diana Peña

*Who am I?* “Do you mean where I’m from?—” (physically? Mexico. Honestly? Boyle Heights, a hamlet obscured by the twisting tendrils of freeways and glowing streets. Truly? the Percy Jackson series. The typed serifs of young adult fantasy novels and the glowing, clustered Verdana font of online fanfiction, rigid blocks of text perennially stretching downwards) (me—a chimera of the women and men I read, characteristics stitched together like some looming Frankenstein). “—what I one day might become?—” (happy, I hope. that’s all I want—to be okay; an English teacher in some urban small town in Japan thirty minutes away from Tokyo by train; an editor and translator to a well-paying publishing house; a conversationalist, a proud of mother of—at the very least—sixteen dogs; a prospective astronaut with a bachelor’s degree in astronomy; an acclaimed film director with skill to rival Christopher Nolan—the Amiga of the cinema). “— what I do?—” (try to survive, honestly. Live minute by minute, day by day. I write fanfiction, winding letters warped to fit a vision to abstract to ever be translated to reality properly. I learn other languages, primarily Japanese—こんにちは—and anything else I can). “—what I’ve done?—” (I’ve survived — this is my greatest feat. I’m proud of this most. I read, I write, I play, I talk, I do whatever I need to do to feel alive). “—what I dream? —” (to exceed all expectation, to be satisfied and content for once) “—do you mean who I fear?—” (I have a list - it’s alphabetized) “—do you mean who I love?—” (the calloused hands of my father, a man who would easier break than bend. Do you know how it feels to be treated so tenderly by a man who could break the world apart if he’d like?) (My mother’s stomach, the space my father pressed an ear to listen to me even then when I had no voice, the place she squeezes me against when delivering her hugs).