

The Color of Freedom

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The Color of Freedom

Nainika Sompallie, *John Randolph Tucker High School*

i.

I groveled at the feet of every squirming
 merchant in my village
 Sunk my nails into scathing green
 throats of passersby
 Shattered every bone
 and wall and door
 Tethered myself to unknown
 waters like a young boy grasping
 at a mother's worn hands
 disguised as new

ii.

The green lady waited like fiery blue
 Or
 calming red
 Like a single wish
 in a field of fern
 She looks just like
 in the movies
 just like I heard
 Her torch
 my guide
 my eyes

iii.

The city was sparkly
 the people colorful
 But when I spoke my tongue
 they turned a lifeless gray
 sneering with pinched eyebrows
 and jeering laughs
 They smiled when I was
 their daily walk
 charity case
 But not through their
 rose-colored windows
 or lakeside houses

or if their silver spoon
ever came loose
I was walking
And he spat
Like venomous liquor being forced
down my throat
Until the wetness burned
Burned through the shackles
the rope I thought was
freedom

iv.
Each day it unraveled
it sculpted
Unrelentingly reinvented itself
New hands turned worn
and bony fingers reached out
ready to punch and push and slap
A rope
A tether
a noose

v.
The green lady watched me
intently
as I left
The embers burned in her torch
Not as a flashlight or
my eyes
But as the match that
set my life ablaze
A gray smoldering mess