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Mr. Negrón.

Here are a few excerpts from Poet X.

Read them.

How dare you present this to my child, to Cielo, an underaged minor.

I should not have to explain why this book is inappropriate, or why I will not stand for this being assigned by your school to my 12-year-old 7th grade daughter.

Stop it.

I am not concerned. I am furious.

- Bill Santiago

X: I'm just saying, I'm ready to Stop being a nun. Kiss a boy, shoot, I'm ready to creep with him behind a stairwell and let him feel me up.

*

What if I like a boy too much and become addicted to sex like Iliana from Amsterdam Ave. ? Three kids, no daddy around, and baby bibs instead of a diploma hanging on her wall. What if I like a boy too much and he breaks my heart, and I wind up angry and bitter like Mami, walking around always exclaiming how men shit, even when my father and brother are in the same room?

*

Papi was a mujeriego. That he would get drunk at the barbershop and touch the thigh of any woman who walked too close. They say his tongue was slick with compliments and his body was like a tambor with the skin stretched too tight. They say Papi was broken, that he couldn't get women pregnant, so he tossed his seeds to the wind, not caring where they landed. They say Twin and I saved him. That if it wasn't for us Mami would have kicked him to tomorrow or a jealous husband would have shanked him dead

*

The boy moves his body closer to mine and I can feel his hands drop down from my waist to my hips then brushing up toward these boobs I hate that I now push at him like an offering, his hands move so close, our faces move closer— and then my phone alarm rings, waking me up for school. In my dreams his is a mouth that knows more than curses and prayer.

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*In bed at night my fingers search a heat I have no name for. Sliding into a center, finding a hidden core, or stem, or maybe the root. I'm learning to caress and breathe at the same time. How to be silent and feel something grow inside me. And when it all builds up, I sink into my mattress. I feel such release. Such a relief. I feel such a shame settle like a blanket covering me head to toe. To make myself feel this way is a dirty thing, right? Then why does it feel so good?

*

In Aman's arms my mouth finds his. In Aman's arms my hands touch skin. In Aman's arms my shirt comes off. In Aman's arms I am shy for a moment. In Aman's arms I am beautiful beautiful beautiful. In Aman's arms I feel beautiful. In Aman's arms my jeans unsnap. In Aman's arms I show myself. In Aman's arms naked skin rubs against mine.

In Aman's arms kisses and kisses. My neck and ear. In Aman's arms fingers touch my breasts. In Aman's arms I feel good. So good."

*

We have to stop. Because now we're lying on the couch and he is on top of me. And his kisses feel so good, everything feels so good. But I also feel him pressed against me. The part of him that's hard. That's still an unanswered question I don't have a response for. And when his hand brushes my thigh and then moves up— I know why island people cliff dive. Why they jump to feel free, to fly, and how they must panic for a moment when the ocean rushes toward them. I Stop his hand. I pull my face from his kiss. He is breathing hard. He is still kissing me hard. He is still bumping up against me. Hard. "We have to stop."