

St. Frances Gumm

Marcella Remund

Patron of girls who have to sing

Saint Frances, sixteen lifetimes of loss
spilled from you in a voice too big to hold,
echoed in the hearts of girls lost on stage,
rainbows tattooed on scooped-out pelvis
or small of the back. Nailed each night
to a marquis, you lived on spoonfed hosts
dipped in sorrow and sweat, just enough
to keep you thin, hungry, dancing at the speed
of light. Swaddled in organza and sequins,
humiliated and adored, you paved us a golden road
into the starlight—you, with hips too big,
crooked mouth made perfect in grownup red,
full lips teasing a mic, stand-in for men
who urged you on, filled you to bursting
with fairy dust until broken glass at your throat
felt like a kiss. Saint Frances, bring the house lights down
to hide my trembling joy, keep me from back alleys,
the bottle, the temptation of dreamless sleep,
the bite of a mic's metal on my teeth.
Bless me with songs like liquid, songs
that pump and clench my heart like a fist,
songs that soothe this radiant net of nerves,
songs that pulse in my heelbones,
cradled in rubies and glitter,
clicking for all they're worth.