

They Told Me My Name Was

by Hannah Labonar

I was just brought into the world when my name was assigned to me. Written
down on a piece of paper,
legally binding me to an identity.

Now don't get me wrong,
I know they had good intentions.

But now,
How am I supposed to feel about these three words gifted to me without a
return receipt.

I ask myself, is my name even really mine?

You see,
I'm a combination of centuries of women
whose names are forever lost,
stolen from them by a vow of *marriage*.

Something that began so fathers could sell
their daughters off to the next man.
A business transaction without regard for her individuality,
cemented by changing *her* name

All of those women whose blood
now runs through my own veins
had their names taken from them.

So how can I embrace this paternally inherited name as mine?

How can I allow myself to be defined
by something that
I did not choose?

Don't get me wrong,
I've gotten a lot of use out of my name
It's been good to me.

But the silenced whispers of the women who came before me

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always echo in the back of my mind.
Reminding me that with every generation
their names have been lost to men.

So now,
Every time I write my name, I ask myself what it would have been
if it had been mine to choose

Women have been erased,
nameless for centuries, and my name is a spoil.
A reminder of the lost battle
to allow women to define themselves.

They told me my name was set in stone.

- but what if it wasn't?