



SURROGATE STRIKE

Rachel Larrowe

*speculative fiction forward to “Becoming a Writing Tutor as an ESL Student:
Why Take the Risks?” by Deborah Bitanga*

Today, for the first time since orientation, I went to campus. On the quad, academic surrogates were protesting. “Everybody owns their own work! Everybody owns their own name!” they chanted. I made my way past them, to the class my surrogate had been attending for weeks. In the classroom, a cluster of students sat comfortably together, while others sat at the edges, isolated and unsure. Everybody looked skeptical.

“I see we have some new faces,” said the professor tentatively. “Because of the strike, I bet. That’s good, because that’s what we’re writing about today. Start with something you saw or heard on your way here. Then just keep writing, even if you only put down ‘I don’t know.’”

Everybody owns their own work. I don’t know. I agree, I guess, but you can sell what you own, or rent it out. Surrogates sell their work. And we pay them. I don’t know why they aren’t happy. I don’t know why I’m not happy. Everybody owns their own name. I don’t know. I own my name but it’s a house I don’t live in. I’ve always had surrogates because my family doesn’t want to risk losing our home, our jobs, ending up surrogates ourselves...I don’t know. This is my first time writing in years. All my papers get A’s. I don’t know what to say. But it feels good to say something, to write with my own hand under my own name.

“Does anyone want to share?”

Silence.

“It’s not graded...”

A few students raised their hands, so I did too. The professor looked at me. “What’s your name?” she asked. “Marissa,” I said. The professor nodded.

I read.

“Marissa,” she said, beaming, “it’s wonderful to finally hear your voice.”