

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Aruni Wijesinghe: Two Poems

Aruni Wijesinghe · Thursday, November 4th, 2021

Glow

The summer I am seven years old
Philip Maneri from down the street
teaches me
to catch fireflies
in empty Hellman's jars,
air holes punched in the tin lids.
We light our library books
with flickering lanterns,
and beating wings cast
tiny shadows on words.
We release our miniature lamps,
glints of lightning
in our cupped hands,
and return to lives
behind screen doors.

That same summer
Geoffrey Maneri shows me
fireflies still glow
after he kills them.
His sneakers smear
comet tails across our porch.
He smashes the bugs
between sweaty palms, anointing
his face and arms
in their bioluminescent deaths –
reminding me boys can paint themselves
with the glow
of what they destroy.

Goldie Unlocks

— *after Ron Koertge*

She rattled the doorknob, then let herself in.
She called it taking shelter.
She didn't think of it as it breaking and entering.

She sampled all three bowls of porridge, dipping her spoon repeatedly.
She complained about the first two. She wolfed down the third.
She didn't think of it as petty theft.

She sat in all three chairs, fidgeting.
She dented the cushions, scuffed the legs. She broke the third.
She didn't think of it as destruction of property.

She climbed the steps to the bedroom, each stair creaking.
She rumpled the sheets, left smudges with her dirty shoes.
She slept in the smallest bed, undisturbed by conscience.

She screamed when she saw bears, didn't try to defend her actions.
She brushed past the bewildered three, taking the stairs two at a time.
She never thought of it as trespassing.

She knew her golden curls were her passport to the world.
She never doubted her right to be anywhere, do anything,

every door unlocked.

Photo credit: Alex Dueñez

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