

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Gina Duran: Two Poems

Gina Duran · Tuesday, March 26th, 2024

Mother Says Don't Be Like the Street Urchins Down the Street

I don't know what that is, but apparently
it's bad. Apparently, it's when children have fun by themselves
and get dirty. Mother says I look like a street urchin

because I don't brush my hair. *Look at this rat's nest.* She grits
her teeth. Smacks down sharp teeth of a brush into my skull.
Yanks. Now, I have knots on my scalp.

Large knots with bruises that nobody can see. Neither can I.

Chunks of my hair stuck in the bristles. *You're 4, you should know
how to brush your hair by now.*

White children with smudges run by our house. Climb trees and chain
link fences. Throw balls and sticks.
I play in a backyard. Contained. I am good.
Like my big black fluffy dog—Bear.

I sneak around to find hiding places. I like to hide from Mother.
To make myself invisible. I crawl under our mint green house—next to bronze
pipes. Mother never calls for me, because I'm safe.

It's dank and dark—silent. I am silent. I am a brown field mouse
sneaking under corners. Collapsing its bones. Mother is scared of mice.
Dad catches them and frees them outside. One suffocated in glue,
Dad says that's sad. I move my eyebrows to look sad, because Dad does.

I don't actually feel anything. I don't feel sad. I don't feel anything.

Under our house—I feel safe crawling on my hands and knees
with hard gray ground. It's cool and moist—it is a passage to another world.
But I know where Mother is, at all times. Creaking planks of wood and heavy
thumps and bumps from the heels of her feet signal, like morse code. I am a spy—
creeping between worlds. Underground where trolls live—but safe from monsters

and Dad's thick tan leather belt. Mother always makes me *choose* it.
But I am good at hiding.

Bear tries to follow me, but I go places he can't go. I shimmy up chain link fences, like street urchins do. Sshh...Mother doesn't know. I am not a good girl. I climb on top of roofs. I eat candy where Mother can't see me. Only Bear can see me. He is waiting, looking up at me. Only he sees I am bad. Here nobody sees me, but I can see them.

I can see cars from above, like a bird. I want to fly. One day I will become a bird and talk to trees. I want to jump...

but I can't fly—not even run and hop like our neighbor's peacocks. I will make wings out of leaves and feathers.

When I fly, I will go to heaven—nobody will know—heaven is the safest place to hide. If I run fast enough my wings will catch air. Bear chases after me. I can't take him with me, Mother says dogs don't have souls.

If he dies he will go to hell, burning in extra hot fire, being stabbed with hot sticks—for eternity. I will teach him to behave. To stay. To listen. To be a good boy. Maybe, God will make an exception.

I try to teach him to sit and stay. He doesn't listen. But I am his mother—I have to teach him, otherwise he won't learn. I am a good mother. So, I smack him.

*

Dad Says I'm Like A Horse

...and like a horse I have to be broken-in. He says Marines are broken in,

so they can save lives. It's important to be prepared at all times and always give 110 percent. That's how you become a hero.

Dad sits from his golden barrel shaped chair, like he is king or God calling me like a dog:

*Hey, Stupid. Stupid...Stupid...Stupid...
Stuuupid*

He keeps going. He won't stop until my aching body bursts enraged with grief, because

I am a horse—too wild to be broken.
God must build walls and pillars

inside me, like Achilles...

My dad has found my heel. He says so.
He will wrap himself around me and pin
my body to the floor. Face deep into gray

padded carpet. His mustache rubbing along
my cheek—lips on my ear—he bellows:

Pee Pee Queen

Get up

Fight

I will. Mother will come out of her room
scolding me, like a hierarchy. Irritated by my voice
from top of the stairs.

It's my fault for not staying silent
for being wild and unbroken.

But I am broken
but wild. Mother doesn't see that.
Dad chuckles a deep bellied guffaw—
Stupid.

Tomorrow, Mother will have me move cinder blocks
under August's sun. Because I am a horse
and need to be broken-in. For being weak.

*



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