

The Man Hands I Wear

Lia-taré Brown

The man hands I wear are shy because
they hide behind my back.
They're big and out of proportion;
they don't feel like my own.

As I walk, my hands pull me forward
and people stare.
They become shy again
and hide behind my back.

Later, they come out again
and I spin around,
the weight of my hands pulling me
this way and that.
Those evil hands,
so big and ugly.

I sit on the stoop of my brownstone,
stuffing those big hands under my thighs,
rocking on them.
I take them out to cover
my wet, teary face and suddenly

they're the best.
They're perfect.
I pat down my fluffy hair
and feel the air rush past
my perfect fingers.
I hold them out for all to see.

See, see.
Hold, hold these perfect hands
and tell me they're not the best,
the softest, and
my own.

1

Sonnet 43

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as the turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith,
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints – I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life – and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

2

LISTEN TO THE MUSTN'TS

Shel Silverstein

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child.
Listen to the DON'TS
Listen to the SHOULDN'TS
The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS
Listen to the NEVER HAVES
Then listen close to me –
Anything can happen, child
ANYTHING can be.

3

Mother to Son

Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor -
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now -
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

4

(Anonymous Limerick)

There was an old man with a beard
Who said, "it's just how I feared!
Two owls and a hen
Four larks and a wren
Have all built their nests in my beard.

5

Translating Grandfather's House

E. J. Vega

According to my sketch,
Rows of lemon & mango
Trees frame the courtyard
Of Grandfather's stone
And clapboard home;
The shadow of a palomino
Gallops on the lip
Of the horizon.

The teacher says
The house is from
Some Zorro
Movie I've seen.

"Ask my mom," I protest.
"She was born there -
Right there on the second floor!"

Crossing her arms she moves on.

Memories once certain as rivets
Become confused as awakenings
In strange places and I question
The house, the horse, the wrens
Perched on the slate roof -
The roof Oscar Jartín
Tumbled from one hot Tuesday,
Installing a new weather vane;
(He broke a shin and two fingers).
Classmates finish drawings of New York City
Housing projects on Navy Street.
I draw one too, with wildgrass
Raising from sidewalk cracks like widows.
In big round letters I title it:

GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE

Beaming, the teacher scrawls
An A+ in the corner and tapes
It to the green blackboard.

To the green blackboard.

6

Why Am I So Brown?

Trinidad Sánchez, Jr.
for Raquel Guerrero

A question Chicanitas sometimes ask
while others wonder: Why is the sky blue
or the grass so green?

Why am I so Brown?

God made you brown, mi'ja
color bronce - color of your raza
connecting you to your raíces,
your story/historia
as you begin moving towards your future.

God made you brown, mi'ja
color bronce, beautiful/strong,
reminding you of the goodness
de tu mama, de tus abuelas
y tus antepasados.

God made you brown, mi'ja
to wear as a crown for you are royalty-
a princess, la raza nueva,
the people of the sun.

It is the color of Chicana women -
leaders/madres of Chicano warriors
luchando por la paz y la dignidad
de la justicia de la nación, Aztlán!

God wants you to understand...brown
is not a color...it is:
a state of being a very human texture
alive and full of song, celebrating -
dancing to the new world
which is for everyone...

Finally, mi'ja
God made you brown
because it is one of HER favorite colors!

7

The Sky is Low

by Emily Dickinson

The sky is low, the clouds are mean,
A travelling flake of snow
Across a barn or through a rut
Debates if it will go.

A narrow wind complains all day
How some one treated him;
Nature, like us, is sometimes caught
Without her diadem*.

*diadem – a jeweled headband used as a royal crown

8

Autumn Leaves

When autumn leaves fall
burst of colors red and gold
drifting in the wind

Leaves of gold and red
wrinkled, burnt, kissed by the sun
leaves a memory

9

Thanksgiving

A mountain of baby carrots,
a turkey the size of a cow.
a river full of gravy
a dog that says meow
Every pie known to man
and gallons full of ice cream.
By the time my dinner is over
I surely won't be lean.

10

The Bells

Edgar Allen Poe

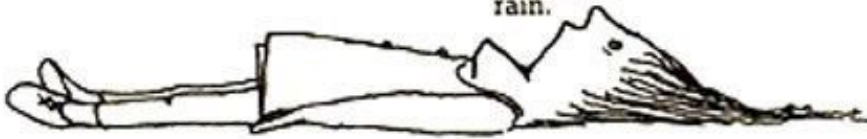
Hear the sledges with the bells - -
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells - -
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

11

LAZY JANE

12

Lazy
lazy
lazy
lazy
lazy
lazy
Jane.
she
wants
a
drink
of
water
so
she
waits
and
waits
and
waits
and
waits
and
waits
and
waits
for
it
to
rain.



Shel Silverstein.com