

Author - 3  
2nd Place

*Teaching Our Daughters To Take Up Too Much Space*

From the moment we are unwrapped from our mothers arms  
the way the first rose blooms from a field of winter:  
We are taught the hereditary habit of shrinking.  
From as early as I can remember  
I had bookshelves spilling with stories of princesses  
locked up in towers, plagued with a tail instead of legs, accidentally eating poisonous apples.  
All waiting for a man's mouth to make them human again. To kiss the death  
out of their poison. To save this poor girl, stitched from tissue and silence.  
From a young age, I was taught that to be a woman  
was to be rescued by someone else. That my body was not my own,  
unless a man made it one.  
It is a teaching I do not remember learning  
To burn down this childhood house.  
When you are around someone long enough, you begin to pick up their habits:  
The way my friend would pinch at her stomach.  
A woman in a hotel bathroom, criticizing the mirror.  
Watching my mother earn 75 cents to a man's dollar  
Highschool girls are terrified of wearing a skirt to school  
because their teachers would remind them of how their bodies  
were unwanted distractions, because they were *hindering their male classmates education.*  
And here is the lineage of shrinking women, sacrificing an 8th grade girl's bony knees  
for the sake of excusing another teenage boy.  
It is a habit of making our girls hate themselves.  
People wonder why girls always say "sorry"  
before asking a question.  
it is because we are taught that our voices take up too much space  
that we are an apology.  
But what I should have been told  
was how there is nothing more powerful, more dangerous  
than a woman who loves herself .  
There is nothing more beautiful and violent  
than a woman,  
working 4 shifts a day, or a mother who runs the household,  
who can say *I love myself.*  
Instead of giving our daughters stories  
of how to be rescued, how to be saved, how to be forgotten  
let's start reminding our daughters of all the battles we fought, and won

Because we are soldiers in silk  
fighting this war on body and mirror  
learning to plant blossoms in our bruises  
to grow gardens in our gashes,  
healing wounds from history's grenades  
remind her she is not an apology  
They say a woman is like a tea bag; you never know how strong it is until it's in hot water.  
So give her bedtime stories of Joan of arc,  
a young girl who led the french army into a battle against the English, and won.  
give her kisses of cleopatra, 18 years when she became queen of the Nile  
fill her lungs with the song sacagawea, with a baby on her back  
hauling lewis and clark across North america  
Sing her lullabies of Malala, 15 when she demanded that girls be allowed to receive an  
education. A man slithered onto her school bus  
shot her in the temple 3 times. 3 years later,  
with no apologies, she stood in front of the united nations  
told them how her country was on fire

We are not here to burn the skin of our sanctuary  
we are here to rebuild the ruins of our temple  
long ago destroyed  
instead of learning to say "I love you"  
we could learn to say "I love my self"  
the most ruthless battle cry there ever was.