

SLIME VIDEOS & other poems

By Sarah ColoN

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...S. Colon is a phrase-coining, page-turner (two of those seven dirty words Carlin says you can never say on criticism): The other five that apply are fain, feign, sinn feïn, vain and so fine. : “when something common and homely / brightens, then shakes with radiance.” What is she talking about here? Some ladies’ cosmetic? A jar of hand cream, should I know? is it obvious to everyone else? My woeful lack of comprehension for all things manifestly self-evident is sadly chronic and likely terminal—she lost me after “four-inch,” but I love it. You’ve got to read the words that surround this couplet, “Show him the flowers on the mango tree, / which hasn’t bloomed for two years.” Commanding that we are all of us each suppliant, in the least, to Fate. “tell him if this much blossom can rupture / the salty green, anything is possible.” ‘...water come to me eye,’ Liza, eclipsing Saturn’s moon. Thank goodness for ‘Tax Day’ “April is / poetry and taxes month...” Taking me back, Colon’s bran of poetry is a must read—(Spacing, font & formatting is poet’s own.)*

Slime Videos

We watch them
on a four-inch screen:
female hands with nails lacquered
like fresh linoleum, each finger tapering
down to its colored square. The slime sits,
contained in plastic jars like perfume bottles:
here a hot air balloon, there a folded parasol
unfold to release swirling colored plasmas.
The fingers dive. They pinch containers of seed
beads, sequins, sparkling glitter, upending each
into the slime. A tube of lipstick, a square of rouge,
land on the gelatins which barely quiver. The fingers
hover, their green waxed tips building suspense
from the air, five inches of nothing between them and the slimes,
then fold, birdlike, and fall toward the gelly’s edge.
The colors stretch, they pleat. A shimmery red whorls over
mayonnaise white, sequins and waxes collapsing underneath.
The fingers pull it bubble thin: the slime a window to the slime,
glimmer of gem and glitter beneath. It’s sun on water,
stirred blades of grass, the sound of breaking underneath your feet,

and my daughter loves it. Manicured hands choreographing
a galaxy, this substance, neither solid nor liquid, the way soap bubbles refract
light into color, a sharp intake of breath, when something common and homely
brightens, then shakes with radiance.

When Breaking the News to a Teenager With a Terminal Illness

Do not say, "Everyone has an expiration Date."
Foreshadow nothing. Make unreasonable demands:
tell him to watch his salt; discuss plans for college.

Make him pause his video game
and come outside. Point out the mockingbird.
Tell him it often sings all night.

Show him the flowers on the mango tree,
which hasn't bloomed for two years.
Make plans to cook and can the yellow flesh

this winter. Tell him brackish means a mix
of saltwater and fresh, that both alligators
and dolphins can swim here. Stuff the canoe

full of pillows and row him around the mangrove island.
Take him to the place where the spoonbill alights,
pink and clumsy as a magnolia flower;

tell him if this much blossom can rupture
the salty green, anything is possible.

Tax Day

April is
poetry and taxes month,
fitting what you make
that's taken (tax, toll, tithe)
with what feeds you--
thirty percent to IRS
minus the child tax credit
(there are so many children).
My share paid in sleep,
weariness, and worry.
It's always green here but April
is not hurricane season
and Lord, but the green
isn't cruel. Life hurts
when it's starting
and when it's ending:
white stones cutting through
the gums, crocus buds
erupting. The children
knock into my bed,
and an eddy forms deep
in my belly, the inward scream
that makes me cover my ears
and sob silently.
In mothering so much is taken.
I cook resentfully, steam
the rice with sighs.
We filed our taxes last week.
I made chicken tonight.
My children make me
happy, and also unhappy.

Cassandra Edifies Brian's Wife

Listen: you cannot save him.

Your lids will shutter. Sleep comes for you
like a juggernaut, poor untormented thing—
you'll sink into it like a child dippy on honeyed milk.
You'll let your guard down when he dozes but his mind will
torment him awake an hour later, and there you will be,
snoring, while he wanders the dark hallways. Even
if you manage one caffeine-fueled night,
you'll collapse the next, or nap for half
an hour. You will be at work, with
the children, or sleeping, while
he practices hangman's knots
and researches hemlock. You
can't prevent this alone, and
nobody will believe you nor
help you keep watch.
Sleep, child. Practice
acceptance.

We Used to Walk a Mile to School in the Snow

We used to stand
shoulders touching
in elevators, on the subway.
“Like sardines,” we’d say.
We used to fear a stranger’s
breath only for its humid
odors, its hot closeness.
“Breathing down my neck”
was not a phrase for brushes
with death. We used to greet
with open palms, hold hands
with strangers, saying “Nice
to meet you.” We’d catch
sneezes and coughs in our mitts
like baseballs, wipe noses
on sleeves, tease the person
who kept jellied alcohol
behind their monitor or wiped
a keyboard before use.
We left bathrooms so cavalier,
passing our paws under faucets,
skipping soap, flinging droplets
everywhere. We’d kiss babies
on the mouth. We’d cram
like little fish around a table,
singing off-key, a flaming dessert
walking toward us. We’d bend
low over the flames, use breath
as extinguisher, blowing
until all that’s left was smoke.
Then we would cut up the cake,
passing out pieces to everyone.

Fencing

Start with a twining of cables
punctuated by steel thorns.

Stretch it all around the perimeter,
by twos or threes,
anchored at wooden posts.

Now, peel them apart:

Plant your hiking boot
against the bottom thread,
stranding it to the dirt.
turtletail your hand inside your flannel
and pull the second seam up, hard.
scuttle through like a garter snake.

Leave a little hair on the barbs.

THE POET SPEAKS: *My own journey as a poet began with the idea that poetry should only be written about the things poetry is often written about—love, nature, the elements, beauty, hope, despair. Boring, everyday events like watching YouTube videos or filing taxes didn't seem to have any place in poetry.*

As I grew as a writer, and read more poets, this idea changed. A.E. Stallings writes beautifully about her children's glitter ("Glitter") and buying cheap folding chairs for a new home ("After a Greek Proverb") and Ted Kooser has a poem entitled "In the Basement of a Goodwill Store," which is set exactly where you'd think from reading the title. In one writing workshop I attended, some of my favorite poems were by a car mechanic who compared a car's engine to her relationship and wrote about the music of pistons.

I think everything has a place in poetry—it's not the subject that makes the poem, but the attempt to see deeper than the surface of the subject, and things that would initially seem unpoetic might have the greatest potential for poetry because their depths are un-plumbed.

I began this series of poems as a group, part of a collection about domesticity and motherhood. It's an exploration into everyday life, my personal attempt to look deeper into the everyday, the mundane, and find the beauty, joy, or despair inscribed there.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Sarah Colón is a poet and educator from the American West who spent most of her childhood in Montana as a second-generation member of a religious cult whose members were preparing for impending nuclear disaster. A mother of four, she has worked in the food service and childcare industries while freelancing as an editor and copywriter. She currently

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