Joy Ride

I remember the car you drove
How my light-weight body nearly flew out your heavy-duty truck
as you sped across, what I would barely call a road
even with the imagination of a 9-year-old.
My knuckles would bleach as I gripped tightly
managing the conflict between fear and adrenaline
then, you would grin through the window
you left open so that you would know
I was safe, and somewhat whole.

My sekuru \(^1\) is tough
it was unnecessary to say
Your military guns etched into the wall
screamed that you are fighter
They are the same ones that greeted my father
when he had the audacity to declare
he was in love with your daughter
I always imagined
You would strike the same fear
In my husband-to-be
So that he never doubted
this family should be taken seriously

Muzukuru\(^2\)

---

\(^1\) Sekuru = grandfather
\(^2\) Muzukuru = granddaughter

© 2022 Medical Humanities & the Arts Symposium, Stanford School of Medicine, Flames in the Night: The Joy of Storytelling
A word of embrace
    echoing endearment
    Muzukuru
When you were proud of me
    Muzukuru
When I hobbled home with broken skin over knobby knees
    Muzukuru
When you missed me, but did not want to stop me from pursuing my dreams
    Sekuru
I should have
    Reached through the window of your truck more often
    Taken you on joy rides of the mind
    when your swollen fingers
    could no longer grasp the steering wheel.

They say life is fleeting
    They are wrong
I know exactly where to find yours
    The Coca-Cola bottle store
    Where you sold advice more than food
    Taught me to beat old men at Checkers
    Lighted me guardian of the cashier
    Announced deeply, gruffly, emotionally
    Your muzukuru is here

Well, it is my turn
    My sekuru is here
Keyboard
Backspace
Can I install this function in my life?
Make it a handy shortcut
that I do not even have to think about.
Index finger hovering over it,
ready to act, agile, gamer.

My parents fighting because I lost weight,
again.
Backspace

The headaches
when brain clashes with skull,
thoughts like marbles bouncing off the walls
taking up space
and boring holes
Backspace

Anxiety driving a wedge between
relationships too young to be strained.
Accusations of not doing enough
There is no failure when you do not try,
I argue
Backspace

Waking up to hear
That the girl who smiled at me yesterday
Is now a shadow of a ghost
Haunting the spot, she thought looked like freedom

© 2022 Medical Humanities & the Arts Symposium, Stanford School of Medicine, Flames in the Night: The Joy of Storytelling
Why not delete?
Delete says stop
Delete implies defeat
Backspace demands pause
Pause and breathe,
let tortuous air out
of burdened lungs
Pause, because this story
has a sequel
and I am the main character.