

Writing | Symposium 2022

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### 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*<sup>1</sup> 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*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sekuru = grandfather

<sup>2</sup> Muzukuru = granddaughter

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

Backspace

Backspace

Backspace

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.