Wolves

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When he noticed the bite marks
and scars that adorned my back,
I simply responded
Wolves.

1. I will teach my daughter to treat her body like a house,
teach her she is full of rooms;
how to lock those room with separate keys,
how to leave some open.
how to seal one shut.

2. I am reminded as I get older,
I am gathering more rooms.
I am a hostel full of hostage memories
somewhere between denial and acceptance
I realize the bargaining is never really over.

3. I will tell her men will come inside
whether by invitation
or hushed footsteps.
Both will tell you not to scream.

4. We talk about the basement
when we are alone in the dark.
I am teaching her to feel comfortable here.
There is a certain peace in this echoing chamber.

This is a place where she hides her bodies.
This is where she will hack at her insides.

5. In the kitchen is where the love grows,
it’s also where the knives hide in case
you decide to peel back his Adam’s apple and take a bite
or scrape the scraps of love off the walls after
the fire consumes you whole . . .

6. I will teach her bedrooms
are not the place to keep secrets.
Although, sometimes it’s where they hide
when they are too young to understand
what they seek is not what they found.

Ashley Nakanishi-Shankles is an Uchinna Poet, actress, playwright, educator and human rights activist. Steady reppin’ the Ryukyuan Kingdom of Okinawa. She is the author of Blood, Sweat, and Breastmilk and forthcoming prose, “She Crazy” and comic book series “The Last Sakura”. Currently she teaches English and Culinary Arts at Olomana Schools. When she is not scheming up ideas for education revolution, she is busy traveling the world with her daughters and dogs.
Shankles

I will teach her that love will
turn your ribs into a revolving door,
where people come and go as they please.
Some will only stay to rest their bones,
others will try to make a home here.

7. I will teach her bedrooms
will convince her to slip off her pride
like a skirt, unhinge her ego like a bra,
and sometimes the soliloquy of a lonely man
will teach her of true nakedness.

In the bathroom, where
one day she will count her ribs
examine the contours of her face
through a filtered camera lens...
I will teach her to see her as she is,
to not compare herself to material beauty
but her own.

How she has aged with a gentle grace.
How she fills her body and voice more fully now.

8. I will teach her that bedrooms can host
just as many dreams as they make talk shows
about the teeth of night terrors …
That we will celebrate our womanhood
or grieve the innocence left behind.

Wolves

I will teach her about the wolves
with sharp carnivorous teeth.
I will teach her to not be sheep,
how to treat the infectious thoughts and
break the cycle through my own example.

9. The object behind the final door
is where her self worth can breathe easily.
I’ll teach her that room should only be
traveled by the self. To seal it shut.
Decorate it however you please,
it will change as you do darling.

10. When the now father of my child
looks at my adornment of scars,
I remind him I learned to fight Wolves,
that our daughter is part wolf.
So if they ever come knocking on her doorstep
she will know how
to bite back.

Done by Debbi Reynolds