

What I Would Tell Her

By Dana Dajani

“Psst!” I would call her over.

Wide-eyed and toting a pillowcase full of goodies, Dana would look to Mama and Baba—occupied with a Mouse named Heba, and quietly skip away, attracted by this strange yet familiar woman, unafraid.

“I’d like to give you a real treat!” I’d offer, “If you’ll let me.”

“Suuuure!” She’d say as she’d sway in her white dress, absolutely angelic, extending her receptacle in the hopes of scoring more chocolate. She had already collected three times as much loot as the Mouse had. But victory was usually hers, and when the Mouse was out of candy she would surely share or at least barter to her benefit.

“For these gifts you’ll have to close your bag and open your mind. Can you do that for me?”

She would nod enthusiastically, eager to display her adeptness. As her arms dropped and she inched closer I would open my hand for hers, jolted by the pure electricity emanating from her fingertips. She would abandon her sack of sweets and join me on a walk through our Texas neighborhood, crowded with costumed children carrying candy home to meditate on sugary shrines and polite, paranoid parents scouring the Halloween bounty for a renegade razorblade or needle that made it into a Mars bar. They ran our candy through an X-ray machine that year,

safer-than-sorry in suburbia so that if the fear of one and other didn't kill us first, the radiation surely would. And when we finally found a quiet spot lit by the full moon, I would tell her:

“Let everything you do be an act of worship. Every word you say, a prayer.”

Her glistening eyes would blink rapidly before searching my own for further clarification, her curiosity an unquenchable thirst.

“You make a beautiful Angel tonight,” I would muse over a laugh. “Always know-- that with glittery wings, starry halo or no, you are close to God.”

Her brow would furrow, not in repulsion to the thought or at the sudden shift in my tone, but because God was still simply a word, as free as a bird and as vast as the ocean, as new as civilization. She would search the ground around her and shrug with a half sigh, embarrassed to admit that she had only heard of this “God” in passing, though she was quite familiar with the seamless oneness like sunlight, in which she bathed her soul. She had long recognized that the self-same happiness that bubbled in her own belly was excavateable in others as well, when given significant effort and appropriate attention. She was on a first name basis with her desire to explore the multi-dimensional space around her and the beings she encountered within it. She had already fallen in love with play.

“You won't always be the same girl you are at this very moment. In fact, every cell in your body will be replaced, every thought in your mind be morphed uniquely new, your feelings refreshed... But at the core of it all, under your fat and philosophy, will be your dearest asset, your strongest organ producing an even, unwavering beat for as long as you live. No one will ever be able to take it from you; it is yours. It is the rhythm to which you will dance around this planet.”

She would place her hand smartly over her heart, the way her American teachers had coaxed her to do every morning at school, this time in a genuine pledge of allegiance.

I would nod in approval as I told her, “This muscle will continue to grow strong. It will be very powerful and it will propel you. Those blessed with power should cultivate generosity, so practice giving every day. Give selflessly, give everything.”

At this, the shape of her eyes would shame the moon; the twin orbs each reflecting a brightness that illuminated both the time and space around her, a smile stretching like a cat between the cushions of her cheeks.

“Your heart is to be shared, freely. Some will not know what to do with the offering, dropping it like dynamite, but to others it will be an S.O.S when they've been lost at sea. You'll see.”

Hypnotized, her eyes, now crescents coaxed by the sumptuous clouds of her easy smile, would glaze as she gazed off into a portal of possibilities.

“And always know that you are loved. You will blossom into a beautiful person, a lily from mud. Strive to remain true to yourself, this essence. Listen to your dreams, for they will be the maps that guide you to your presents. Be patient, let the origami universe fold and unfold before you. But also be bold, and follow the scent of your instinct, for it will rarely lead you astray. Many will share their experiences and opinions with you. Listen to all of them, listen well. But listen closest to your heart, for it will weigh all options and be a constant compass, no matter the terrain.

Danger will crawl under your security blanket, killing your pet comfort, but when he finally gathers the nerve to strike at your heels, he will find you've gotten up for a glass of water. And when you return to rest, you'll understand that he was just as scared of you as you were of him; you're larger than him, after all-- grand, infinite, free. Believe me.”

I would notice a dream devouring her consciousness and quickly color her grey matter a shade of passionate Revolution.

“You will have to fight for Peace. I know it seems contradictory, but fight. Fight for yourself. Fight for your family. Fight for those who cannot fight for themselves. Don't be intimidated to share your mind. Use your voice to trill an Arabian battle cry. Never make a decision out of fear, be

brave. You will not fail, for there is nothing you can lose. Let every act be one of worship. Let every word be a prayer."

And with that, I would run my fingers through her hair, and kiss her forehead as I wrapped her body around mine and carried her back to Baba and Mama, still fawning over a Mouse I know that she will always love.

And while she is already lost to Nod, exploring some otherworld, her arms will curl around Baba's neck like the clasp of a perfect necklace.

"Revere these beings," her grasp would remind me. "They have turned away from the world they knew to protect and provide for you."

Exploring their youthful faces will help me map their journey to today's pouches, pocks, and puckers. Their perky pace to the foreign place they've made into their home will explain to me where their enthusiasm was spent, to whom they mortgaged their energy.

And I will never again forget it. I will look up at Diana the moon as I thank them for my name, my birth, this life. And I will walk away into the light, every act, one of worship, every word a prayer.