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Our Slaps

By Meenakshi Verma

Abstract

"Our Slaps" raises the question of whether and at all traumatized mothers, who once used to be abused daughters, can confess and escape their psychic hinterlands without being tricked into becoming abusive by subconsciously switching their role identity from a victim to a persecutor. The poem achieves this by boldly offering that rare chance to one such mother who ultimately dares to lay the first cornerstone of intention for a healthy legacy of unabused women. Despite being trapped in a hopeless vicious cycle, this mother struggles to allow her young daughter to keep her innocence intact by deliberately curbing her demonic instincts and breaking the toxic pattern. Thus, we witness a woman- once a daughter, now a mother, earnestly trying to forgive and apologize for the years of abuse, collapsing the cycle of violence that feeds on itself for many generations.

Keywords: Mother-daughter relationship, Victim-persecutor, Intergenerational abuse, Role identity, Trauma-healing, Transcendence, Emergence, Forgiveness

1 Meenakshi Verma is a changemaker. She is also known to be a PHAMTC Mental Health Strategist, and her research project aims to examine the phenomenon of 'Post-Traumatic-Growth'. She has received her master's degree from Banaras Hindu University in English. As a creative writer, she enjoys unravelling the delicious psychological ironies of family life and domestic relationships, as is characteristically displayed in her recently published short story, 'Honour Killing'. She is passionate about understanding the mysteries of the healing of the inner world of traumas in moments of profound realizations in a person's life, as done in the 'Creation in Silence' art piece published in the Journal of International Women's Studies. Following are the links to access some of her works: https://writinginawomansvoice.blogspot.com/search?q=The+Rooster+ , https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss9/33/ Contact: Instagram: psychological_mind_therapy (Inspiring you to be worthy of the life & essence you command.)
Our Slaps

I
I slapped her.

II
There
on the floor
she lay.
Her wound had opened up
as her knee had hit the floorboard.
(The Wound
that she received having fallen off her first bicycle ride
without those support wheels.)

It was our first slap.

III
Yes!
I
did slap her
(no running from that fact)
to stop her from doing what I could comprehend
would end up badly for her.

IV
And now,
as she lay on the ground
(to be precise,
crouched
by the big blue vase that decorated the corner),
I had no idea of what she was feeling.
Not because I could not imagine what she must be going through, but because I was busy feeling my own set of emotions.

And all I could feel was-

- Guilt,
- Remorse,
- Hate,
- Fear,

and a deep desire to somehow justify my act.

I knew not why, but in that god-forsaken moment, I just did.

V

(So intense was the desire that I had to look away, to be able to do so, sin conscience).

VI

But, as soon as I turned, (paralyzed
by memories),
I was taken aback
to witness the infinity of abuse,
    reflected
    in the mirror,
    hanging there,
    solo,
that held my vision captive.

VII
No!
I am not some old version of what ideal Mothers once used to be.

No!
It can’t be!
I can’t be the old version of what monster Mothers used to be.

VIII
You have no idea,
    how much of
    Guilt,
    Hate,
    Remorse,
and Fear had had me.

IX
I feared,
abusing her.

I feared being her God.

Feared,
this moment repeating
    some
    past.

**X**
I feared she would never be able to forgive me for what I had done,
for,
trust me,
no one can ever forgive the doings of their God.
Not because they cannot, but because they do not know if they could,
for would it not be blasphemous, in the human eye, to do so?

**XI**
When I finally saw her,
    my daughter,
    among million others,
    cry and crouch
(by the big blue vase
    that annoyingly occupied the corner),
    my insides screamed:

*STAND UP!*

**XII**
*Stand up and*
*see my shallowness*
*before*
*justifying it as something that parents, being parents, ought and can do,*
*before accepting it as normal to be thus abused.*

*Stand up!*
*Before fearing someone else-*
someone
abusive
like me
(someone like my mother
and the one before she).

STAND UP!
Before
you let
one crime,
invite many.

XIII
For several moments
when nothing happened,
I felt toxic fear
helplessly spreading through my veins,
numbing my hope-
to afford to set her free.

XIII
But the frosts of pain
began to dissolve
without forming icicles,
(almost as if in response to my genuine regret
than my desperate screams),
when she raised her earthly brown eyes
full of innocence
intact.

XVI
I fell on the white floorboard
with a thud,
repeating incessantly-
(for generations to come and those gone by)
“I am sorry.”

XV
“I am sorry.”