Title
Taking on the City: one Mom at a Time

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Taking on the City: One Mom at a Time

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Abstract

These three poems express the challenges of an urban mom to see the city despite, and through, her kids’ perspective.
Public Art with Kids

7 year old: You come here for THIS?
6 year old: You are taking a PICTURE of it?
Mom: YES! See these pressed, rusty TINS on the side of that building? That’s actually an artwork… It’s HUGE!
6 year old: YUCK!
7 year old: It’s UGLY!
Mom: And the broken MIRRORS among the TINS? They reflect the sky and the clouds and the buildings across, but kind of also distort them…Broken Bridge II…
7 year old: BROKEN??? It’s UGLY and it’s BORING.
6 year old: There is no BRIDGE here!
7 year old: I want to go!
6 year old: You said there’s ICE-CREAM on this SKYLINE. WHERE is it?
Mom: HIGHLINE, sweetheart…it’s called the Highline…
A Playground Perspective

As I lift
my eyes
to meet the walking
signal on
Fulton
and orchestrate
the crossing
of my 2
toddlers
on mini
scooters
and my
mom freshly
jetlagged
from Europe,
I see you
running a
red light
to wherever
your GPS
tells you
I live
now, and
scream
your name.
You slow
down,
honk,
and make
a U-turn.
It’s been
11 years
since we
last loved
each other. What business do we have meeting up in the up-and-coming area of Clinton Hill, Brooklyn? You: an ex-husband and father of 3; Me: a wife and mother of 2? We enter the playground on Classon and Fulton, where mosquitoes hit the swings before kids do. Cars rumble by occasionally; drug addicts and drunkards lean on the sides of bodegas – it is a lazy morning in late May, on the border of BedStuy. Swiftly, 2 cops chase an undesirable (a lonely guy slouching on a lonely playground bench) away. You stand tall and funny as you once did – perhaps
a little provincial with your cowboy hat on – which looked so cool in Blagoevgrad where we first met, probably cool in Maine where you come from, but so uncool in Brooklyn. I stand at a reasonable distance – close enough to hear your jokes and laugh but far enough to not feel small and protected the way I once did, lest some other energy runs through me – like fire – from the tips of your hair into mine – we know how trouble comes on – before we know it, it has burned us both down, like that trash can on the corner across that became
ashes
in no time.
Who set
it on fire?
And why
nobody
bothered
to put it
out?
You teach
my kids
how to
scooter
safely
down a ramp,
and slide
faster
down a slide;
you exchange
cleaning tips
(the steam mop,
the robot cleaner)
with my mom.
She too
laughs at
your jokes
but in
moderation –
she is,
after all,
the mother-in-law
of another.
Later,
you drive us
home a few`
blocks away:
my little boys
sitting in the
booster seats
of your, older, boys –
could these
have been
our kids?
As you
fumble
with your
GPS,
which will
take you
away from here
away from me,
for another
10 years, maybe,
I wonder:
What if
I stay
in this car
with you,
to live the life
I did not,
but once
so wished I
did?
Will I
learn something
new
about
love?
You taught
me that love
was
all about
leaving...
and so
the first guy
who stayed,
I married
doubting
his love
since...
With a new
destination
on your GPS
screen, and
after a friendly
goodbye
you hesitate
for a bit
then drive
away
aware perhaps
perhaps not
that
there is
always
something
uneasy
between a man
and a woman,
especially
in up-and-coming
neighborhoods,
on lazy
spring mornings,
despite the
presence of
children...
...or because of it.
Love
is all about
staying.
An Urban Child Aspires...
with Moussa Toni and Malick Mikayil Cisse

A famous story writer
a fearless fire fighter

an expert Bay-blade spinner
a brave hockey game winner

an awesome basketball player
a fearsome dragon slayer

a classical music composer
a picture day perfect poser

an amazing knockout singer
a soccer team’s best left-winger

a swift Christmas gift wrapper
a talented NYC rapper

a Lego Chima spy
a cool and funny guy

is all I want to be

but adults ask me
which ONE
specifically?

all of these plus
the driver of a magic bus

the master of the silent fart
the wizard of profound dirt art
the inventor of the no-stain shirt
the creator of on-demand burp

a Ninja turtle drawer
a fine paper plane thrower

an origami specialist
a Kung Fu gold medalist

a chocolate tester
a hilarious jester

a famed first-class Brooklyn rock star
with a glow-in-the-dark guitar

or simply a good, smart boy...
... and designer of my
best friend’s favorite toy!
About the author

Blagovesta Momchedjikova takes on the city two boys at a time, whether ice-skating in Prospect Park or strolling on the Highline. To get some writing done, she wakes up early in the morning, when the only sounds around are those of cars speeding down Nostrand Avenue or drunkards singing and cursing on their way home. It is thus that she managed to edit the volumes *Captured by the City: Perspectives in Urban Culture Studies* (CSP 2013) and *Urban Feel* (Streetnotes 2010). By day she teaches writing at New York University.