My Mother’s World’s Child

Jacki O’Donnell*
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by Jacki O'Donnell

English, Junior

I remember sliding, sliding down into the ocean, crags and monstrous chips of red inflamed rock surrounding, rocks that grew pink and shell-colored and soft as they neared the water, warm surprisingly warm water, bath-like but slimy with foam whipped up by the rocks but grating and gritty with minerals. It was salty, I remember so salty I choked but I floated and slid out into the middle of a tiny harbor made by the pink sandy rocks, floated there till now.

My mother gave me the push that made me slide, pushed me into the water, I remember her looking over her shoulder, quickly pushing me, her hair hanging about her face, red, inflamed her eyes were but her face grew pink and shell-colored and soft about the frantic wrinkles, and even though the terrorized flying hair and distorted terror mouth, it was pink and shell-colored and soft because I was her child. She saved me, she hoped it would, so she pushed me and I slid into the water and floated 'till now.

You found me now, I remember, I'm surprised you're still here this world and all, and all these things these pointed jagged buildings that gray shell-button glow and many foam-bubble blinking lights and square now-cushioned rooms. The floors are nice, I could slide all the way into the next square just like I slid into the ocean if you gave me a push like my mother. But everything seems all right and cushioned and buttoned so there's no need to push me, no flames and red inflamed rocks, cities
and people's eyes and banners that burn and people's terror flying hair. My mother pushed me into the water at the end to save her child, to have the salt and water preserve her daughter to future betters and now.

This is better, I'm surprised you're here and I'm here, I'm still quite young not old like I should be considering the water and the time and the salt, but my hands, my hands are old they're red and inflamed not like the rest of my skin, it's smooth yet and young, smooth as these beautiful floors and you are young and handsome as any, I remember those, yes besides the red and terror and ocean I remember it was all right and my hands ache so.

But I'll get along here with all of this just the same I can learn, the lights are so many, the hills are still green and make the sun go down so quickly, I can learn this again because I remember some besides the red burning and the salt and I'm still young but for my aching aged hands, they are my mother's and the rocks' and the cities' but I can learn this future-present for them now. I was saved my mother's world's child till now.

Finale

by Anne Church
Speech, Senior

There wasn’t a whistling bomb.
I didn’t see a mushroom cloud
or hear a tidal wave (but maybe that's
    because I don’t know what they sound like)
There weren’t any wrinkles in the sky
or cracks in the earth.
But it’s gone.
The world was destroyed
by a two-second teardrop.