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He Is A Poet

Richard J. Meyer

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He is a poet.
And he suffers the Chicano, Mestiso, Judeo-Christian, Zen-aspiring angst that only a poet can know.
He weaves words into clouds
clouds into storms
storms into tornadoes.
When he steps up to the mic and begins, he draws the first breath that any man has ever drawn.
Crafting air into sounds that resonate with the soul of any true sufferer
With all the angst that only a poet can know.
His performance rivets--
First himself
and observers if they dare
—his life to the metaphorically steel structures that oppress him.

His words envelop him and her
And her, and her, and...in a cloud of soft blue that each feels as a cocoon of safety and healing
Surely she and he are the only ones to feel and know, the only to ones understand it.
She sees it as a sign of their belonging to each other.
Later, as he watches beads of her sweat roll down her neck and into the pillow on his bed,
He imagines taking these beads and stringing them into a story of their love—
A story that will envelop others in that blue.

His life, his short life, has been long on pain and suffering.
He sits at the table with an old lucky Bic pen, a pen he'll write an ode to some day, and
some yellow paper, and writes.
Immersed in the angst that only a poet can know.

I don't know how they met or how they wound up together—but I do know this:
that some place deep in his universe he gave himself permission to rage and vent
and his suffering was sufficient capital for him to invest in a poet's life.
And this capital afforded him a wealth few could know, an anger few would dare, and
authority few could sanction.
So that day, when he grew tall in that rage and it raised him high above her
and he came crashing down upon her with
the angst only a poet could know,
landing his fist to her face...
He found himself well within his rights, well within what he was allowed.
And what she would, without hesitation, excuse.
Surely a poet with this much sensitivity and this much passion most certainly could
brutalize someone and say
“I love you. I'll always love you.”
But not say, “And always hit you.”
Surely he could, indeed MUST, be afforded forgiveness because of his suffered life.
So she picked up the blame and owned it
Like a gift to a poet’s muse
a crown of lead and thorns
that she would gladly wear.
She convinced herself that it was all okay because, after all, she did not have the angst
that only a poet could know.
She was merely witness to it and victim of it.

Author

Richard J. (Rick) Meyer is a professor at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, NM. He has published articles, chapters, and books on literacy and the politics of literacy; he works with children, teachers, and families to consider ways to support learners in becoming active in the democratic process. Rick has just completed a three-year term as department chair and is glad to be engaging with teachers and children again.