The Messenger
Volume 2017
Issue 1 The Messenger, 2017

2017

The Invisible Children

Sabrina Escobar-Miranda

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger

Part of the Fiction Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol2017/iss1/39

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Messenger by an authorized editor of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
To the invisible children living in poverty in my native El Salvador.

You see them on the road ahead of you. You see the stoplight turn from amber to red and mentally curse as you slam down on the breaks. They are there every single morning. You see their accusing gaze through your car window and lock the doors for good measure. Guilt washes over you-- they are just children, you remind yourself. The guilt pesters you. Grudgingly, you roll your window down an inch and, fist outstretched, toss 25 cents to the dirty, rugged rag on the curb.

It is as easy as tossing scraps to dogs.

The light turns green. Pushing down on your pedal, you speed away. Out of sight, out of mind. Work is a haven. For eight hours, you forget them. Numbers and figures, figures and numbers are your world. They numb the itch that your conscience is begging you to scratch.

It is 6 pm. You stretch and head for your car, briefcase in hand. Thousands of dollars’ worth of information, checks, and technology bounce against your leg. You check your phone and look around. There he is. Palm up, he stares up at you with marble eyes. No words pass his lips, but you know.

Not today, son, you hear yourself say. I don’t have any money, you say, and climb into your car. Your briefcase thuds into the passenger seat as you race away.

The police stop you on your way. What now, you think. Traffic is swelling up behind you, a wave contained by a dam. The police clearly doesn’t give a damn. What is the meaning of this, you ask. The police say there is no meaning.

Stuck, you look around. To your left, you see one. To your right, another. They play on the curb while their mother sells peanuts to the wave. You remember passing her five minutes ago; you remember making a face at her peanuts. You look at the children again, thinking how close they are to the street.

A car speeds by, inches away from the smallest. Now, you are concerned. You turn to the police. His eyes bore into yours. He saw. He understands your silent plea. He shrugs and looks away.
In memory of those without a name.

Today we work at the church parking lot. It is Sunday, busy day. Holy day. We sit through Mass in the scorching sun, waiting for them to come out. Pearled old ladies and pocket-wrinkled green men; busy briefcases and high heels; light-up sneakers and delicate dolls, those we only see in pictures.

The first few trickle out, then they are a herd. Divide and conquer, we say, and run. Please, we say, please, can you buy a flower off me? A cora a flower, señor, please. Jefe, buy a pretty flower for your Barbie child. Nobody has time to stop and smell the flowers these days, we say. Much less buy them. We keep at it until the last straggler has gone. It has been a good day. Altogether, we have $10.

Today we dine like kings.

III

You will not be forgotten.

At least they have milk.

The government promised; every child has the right to a free glass of milk each day.

Sure, you think, their swings are made out of tires and their walls are lined with coarse wire, but at least they have a glass of milk each day. Who could complain? Walking two miles through the rain or the dusty rural plain to get to their forsaken school yard is nothing, because at least they have a glass of milk each day. Aren’t they lucky? You say. They have one classroom, an untrained teacher, old reused notebooks and a glass of milk each day. Can they still work in the fields after their school day? You ask. Can they skip classes because there was no other way to pay? Of course, you say. After all, they have a glass of milk each day. You muster the nerve to whisper, but what about the gangs? Are they still allowed inside the playground? Well sure, you say, they love to come and get their glass of milk each day.

At least they have milk.
You are driving to work again. Something is missing. You pull into your office, sit in your swivel chair and survey the city. It is a beautiful day, like any other. You draw numbers and crunch figures. You get in your car. You get damned by the police. You think of dinner. You go to church. Something is missing. Your son walks into the room. It dawns on you.

The children have become invisible. To you, they are the murals and graffiti that coat the walls of the city.

You no longer see them.

Unnamed // Fatima Del Barco