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And Lead Me Not Into Temptation

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Vázquez-Valarezo Poetry Award
2018-2019 Entry
Briana “Bri” Lee
“And Lead Me Not Into Temptation”

Note: As a Lutheran, I have recited the Lord's Prayer by heart for many Sunday worship services. It serves as a way for Christians to seek forgiveness, to embrace God's love, and to ask for protection from evil influences. It has been a prayer that has resonated with me for years, as have my past struggles with my weight and having a distorted body image. As I was starting to write poetry this past winter term for my poetry class this spring, I wanted to combine these aspects of my life into a poem to give readers a taste into the "temptations" of food itself, the "temptations" of sacrificing the health and well-being of my body for beauty, and the "temptations" of accepting societal, personal, and other people's perceptions of my body as "ugly", "disgusting", or "unworthy" of being beautiful. This poem is heart-wrenching and self-deprecating in nature; while it addresses my personal struggles with my weight and distorted body image, it also serves as a reminder that other young women and girls have struggled and continue to struggle with being comfortable and at peace in their own skin. Additionally, I would like to note that I have found professional help to guide me into having a healthier relationship with my body. While I have taken the initiative to try and be at peace with my body through professional help, the scars from past struggles, bullying, and harassment for my weight will continue to linger and will take time to heal. My weight should not define me, nor should it define other young girls and women who can relate to this struggle. I hope this piece will serve as a voice for countless girls and women who have insecurities about their weight. I would like to thank you so much for your time to read my piece.

And Lead Me Not Into Temptation

*Our Father who art in
Heaven.*

All I can see are their heavenly bodies.
Lean. Tan. Glowing.
Groomed perfection
shining from every television,
every magazine cover,
every commercial,
every billboard,
every post.
If only I could flaunt,
taunt,
and tease
my gluttony.

*Hallowed be thy
Name.*

All in a name.
Hungry Hippo.
Big Girl.
Fat Bitch.
Pig.
Fatass.
Making a plain chopped salad with
my heart,
wilting brown like a rotting piece of lettuce.

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be
Done.*

I wish I could be done with this shit.
Done with the pain,
malicious names and games
inflicted on my fatty, pale
skin.
If only I could be at peace in my own
skin.

*On earth as it is in
Heaven.*

My body is not heavenly.
No way in hell.

*Give us this day our daily
Bread.*

Carbs after
countless damn carbs.
Pasta, French baguettes, doughnuts, muffins, croissants, cheesecake.
The sugary syrups drip from the corners of my lips,
I rot from the inside.
My body craves more,
and more,
who gives a fuck
about the portions.
I lick my lips,
salivating,
like Pavlov's dog.
I keep reaching for the
succulent,
tantalizing,
temptations that leave
a sour, bitter taste in my mouth.

*And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
Trespass against us.*

I do not forgive the middle school guys
who beat me with a baseball bat,
my mind still
blue and black.
I do not forgive
the professor
who told me
Fat people can't write.
That I don't have a future as
a fat person.
I do not forgive
the bullying, the
harassment
of human hyenas
cackling, chuckling;
they watch each ounce
of my food,
my elliptical racing,
my discomfort building.
I cannot forgive
myself for becoming

my worst enemy.
The gleam in her brown eyes,
her lips' smirk,
the pleasure and beauty she feels
in torturing her body,
manipulating herself into thinking
her body is not prey to imaginary, bullshit, false gods.
That she's not trying hard enough to please others
when she should be pleasing herself.
Beating and battering herself
for God knows what.
How the hell can I forgive them?
How the hell can I forgive myself?

*And lead us not into
Temptation.*

Oh, Lord please
lead me not into temptation.
Lead me not into the temptation
of taking my anger out on my body,
the scars embedded on my flesh.
Lead me not into the temptation
the media's
artificial and
photo shopped manipulations
of beauty.
Lead me not into the temptation
of skipping meals and making deals
with my body
to starve us.
Lead me not into the temptation
of bowing down on cold tiles
and divulging my sins.
Lead me not into
disgust and outrage with myself.
Lead me not into
ignoring my body's agony-
her pleas for me to
love her like this.
She cries like someone on all fours,
vomiting, heavy tears sting her eyes.
The same tears I shed
when I look at myself in the mirror-
all 180 pounds of me, with a 38DD,
yanking on my stomach rolls,

my thick thighs,
my love handles asking me
where's the love?

*But deliver us from
Evil.*

Deliver me from the evil
within.
The evil that comforts me.
Deliver me from the evil
of fighting the mirror.
The scale.
The bitch of a voice inside my head
creeping in and hissing that I am not good enough, that I'm not
beautiful.
The bitch of a voice that eggs me on
to starve myself,
to take my anger out on myself,
to feel broken.

*For thine is the kingdom,
And the power, and the glory.*

One day,
I pray for my daughter,
a better kingdom for her.
That she will not falter
and hurt like I do.
And that she will know
daughters,
sisters,
mothers,
aunts,
grandmothers,
cousins,
friends,
fought
and continue to fight
their demons
and distortions.
One day,
I pray that my daughter will have the power and glory
to love herself,
every ounce of herself.

One day,
I pray that my daughter will not be shamed by trespassers
that she will love all neighbors,
no matter how big,
small,
curvy,
skinny,
and able they are.
Every blemish, and every imperfection.

One day,
I pray that my daughter will ask me to walk with her
through her trials, and sorrows.
That she will find
strength,
stamina,
resilience,
hope,
and not the rubble of body-shaming-
the magazine covers,
the commercials,
the billboards,
the posts.
That she won't fight these demons
and distortions.
But for me,
the damage has been done.

For ever and ever

Will my scars linger.
Will I struggle to feel at ease in my own
poor,
pale,
plus-size,
pain-stricken skin.

Amen.

References

D'Aulaire, Ingri, Edgar P. D'Aulaire, and William C. D. Glaser. *The Lord's Prayer*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1934. Print.