

Wind-up Toy

I am my mother's wind-up toy
 inside me is a torsion spring
 that she can wind from across a room
 with one look
 or feeling

She likes to play with me when guests visit
 tells me to sing her favorite song
 tells me to dance with my sister
 mass produces me until I'm cheap

Sometimes I like untwisting myself
 presenting playful for people in the room
 entertaining to earn approval
 who wouldn't want to make their mother happy

But growing up it felt more strained
 to have my mother flaunt my mechanics
 I couldn't run away with gravity like a slinky
 I didn't glow in the dark

There were times she'd use her bare hands to twist me tighter
 tell me the mechanics inside me were hers anyway
 distort her disappointment of what I didn't do for her
 and what I chose to do despite her

Over time I opened myself up to figure out how I worked
 learned how to tie a knot in my metal ribbon and say no to stage requests
 sometimes I'd unravel unable to stage stable
 sometimes I couldn't stand not making her happy
 winding myself wounded until I'd sometimes perform anyway

What I learned is she was right when she said I'm hers
 inside me are her bolts and strings
 that she can wind from across states
 over the phone

When she tells me to scratch her back at night I see her wounds
 imagine where her key was broken in half
 imagine that she regrets
 not being able to put on a show like me

So I sing her her favorite song
 and dance with my sister
 scratch her back until she falls asleep

Gary Coleman

Black boys are the butt of the world's jokes
are characterized by chubby cheeks
fall short
got nothing but their jeans
Black boys work long hours made longer
by failed kidneys
but learn to have impeccable comedic timing
find a way to shine
Black boys got a special kind of story
got sisters who die from overdoses
got abused brothers
are born into families that steal from them
and welcomed into families that would make them unhappy
Black boys punch autograph hunters
Black boys punch people who want something from them
Black boys punch those who remind them of what hurt them
Black boys punch those who remind them of their lives
Black boys take anger management classes
Black boys try to grow
but are stunted -
a side effect of trying to change
what the world deemed wasteful and excessive
and dirty -
Black boys attempt suicide
Black boys just want
to be respected
and to be known for more
than being black boys
but black boys are survived by entertainment
that continues to make fun of them

Mama Strippers to Baby Strippers

Cashmere lends a dress to new strippers
if they need it
but will never talk to them
outside of that exchange.

Jasper said she's had to get three wrist surgeries
since she started dancing in the 80's
tells the new stripper to grip the pole
correctly.

Venom knows she's the best pole dancer in the place
and yells at the new dancers for sitting next to her
and her customers.

Carmen sits the young dancer down
to talk about what bodies are worth
tells her not to look at what most girls are
doing.

Storm said to the new girl
You remind me of me.
When I leave, when the cancer kills me
you should take my name.

Twinkle Twinkle, Little Stars

Twinkle, twinkle, little stars
How we wonder what you are!
*Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.*
Twinkle, twinkle, little stars
How we wonder what you are!

Twinkle, twinkle, little stars
We all tell you what you are!
*Then you show your little light,
But who tucks you in at night?*
Twinkle, twinkle, little stars
We all tell you what you are!

As your bright and tiny, sparks,
Binge drinking your booze in bars
Throwing up, getting in fights,
lighting smoke up in a pipe.
Twinkle, twinkle, little stars,
How we wonder how this starts!

How we wonder how this starts!
How we wonder how you are!
We could not see way to go,
If you do not twinkle so.
Twinkle, twinkle, little stars
How we wonder how you are!

Only when your light is gone,
When you nothing shine upon,
We, the travellers in the dark,
Devour you spark by spark.
'Till we know where new ones are
Twinkle, twinkle, little stars.

Shirley Temple

Little girls cure depression
are the origin story of non-alcoholic cocktails
are box-office attractions
tap-dancing down staircases
singing in safety-pinned diapers
They have dimples and ringlets
don't know how old they really are
are worth millions of dollars
become dolls
Little girls have last names that you don't know
and stop believing in Santa Claus when he asks for their autograph
Little girls are war babies
fighting off those who force themselves onto them
tap-dancing around unzipped trousers
singing and sex trafficked within the safety of systems
Little girls only last a few years
become older
fade in popularity
aren't so liked anymore
grow up to be ambassadors, diplomats, chiefs, public officials, and authors
have daughters
but you didn't know that
and if you did, you'll picture the little girl in the role and suit
smiling, sentimental,
tender and bouncy
But there are always new little girls
to make everyone feel better
because little girls are bubbly
sweet as grenadine
small as a maraschino cherry