

Bugging at a Bar Before It Closed Down

by Marie Anne Poudret

My little blue beetle

lived in a black bottle.

She made a nest of sticks.

Building up her wood stocks,

insect's castles she formed.

The dust she had, she farmed

to grow food from the dirt.

But she made a dart,

when they uncorked the black bottle.

She left her dark castle.

Bye, Little blue beetle!

My little blue beetle does not have six legs; she has two. They are not blue or black; they are a warm shade of amber. My blue beetle does not have insect beady eyes. She has large almond-shaped eyes that shine with the deep browns of oak and the sparks of hazel. Long eyelashes, she curls gently at the tip, frames her eyes.

My beetle, whose real name is Ariana, takes care of her hair. Naturally, they are brown and kinky curly, but she straightens them and bleaches them platinum blond. So much that she burnt them last month. It happened before the shelter-in-place order, before the COVID19 crisis took over the planet, before everything we did every day changed.

Ariana takes at heart anything people say about her look. Last month, coming back from a bar late at night, her hair was bond neatly in a long cream ponytail. Her crisscross tunic drew an allegory of straight lines and curves. I saw a dark, crooked mark on her temple because she had smeared her mascara.

“Hi! How was your evening?” She turned her head away and ran upstairs. “What happened, Gabriel? Did I say something wrong?” My son dropped his dark backpack beside the kitchen countertop. “No, mum! Nothing wrong. It was that white chick at the bar. She mocked Ari’s hair. She swore they could not be natural. Ari refused to answer and turned her back to her.” I pinched my lips. “So, it was the end of it?” Gabriel sat his bulk at the counter. “The chick was drunk. Real drunk! She tried to grab Ari by her hair. I stopped her. She shrieked; she will sue us because I touched her arm with my hand. I laughed at her face. I know our rights. I called security.”

Gabriel’s report made me swallow hard. I was both angry and ashamed because of this stranger. I am white--the type who always needs sunscreen, but I will never try to hurt Ari. At least, never for the way she looks. I was angry because of the actions of that stranger. People who speak and act like her are why white people deserve the name of “World Bully.” I was also ashamed because no words I say or no gesture I made could repair the wrong the people I represent have done to Ariana

Today, Ari is gone. She left yesterday. Because of the shelter-in-place order, the shop where she works closed. The makeup department is not an essential business. Ari thought best to be back at her mom’s house in San Leandro. It makes sense. My son does not leave his room now

that his work as a barman stopped two nights ago. Ari, our beautiful little blue beetle, is not home.

I cannot wait when she is back. Then, Gabriel will smile again. Ari will push my French veggies in the fridge with her hummus, curry, and blueberries. There will be more makeup stains in the sink, but there would be her stains. Life as it should be at our place.

I hope the world will make a place for Ari. There won't be any more white drunk, angry, strange chick bugging her about her hair. I hope people will celebrate on piazza, bars, beauty parlors, and streets. All people--loving people of all nations and color!



Marie-Anne Poudret was born in Bordeaux, France. Throughout her life, she has moved twenty-three times, living in Africa, France, and England before settling in the Bay Area in 2005 with her husband and three children. Marie-Anne was a French major at the University of Dijon in Burgundy, France. Currently, she gives French lessons with Zoom, writes stories and plays. Marie-Anne loves a story that shows man's connection to animals. As a student at Las Positas College, she is pursuing her dream of being a writer by taking creative writing classes.

