

Playing God.

Inspired by a hand selection of poems by Gwendolyn Brooks
WRITTEN & DEVISED BY ENAMA

PT. 1

(inside a dark room, it's late. Late into the morning but not yet sunrise. Kafara hasn't slept in days. She sits on a chair with a metal wire hanger in hand.) The young girl sits still for a very long time. Longer than feels comfortable. Katara starts to punch herself.

I am not evil. I am not a murderer. My mother calls me selfish. She called me a murderer. I thought I was doing the right thing. I thought this was the selfless thing to do. She wants me to Bring life into a world that dont even care about life? No resources, guidance, or good home. I'd be a terrible mother. And this would be a terrible home. Who would want to be brought into that? I drank tea. I swallowed lye. I threw myself. I starved myself. I harmed my body. I've ruined my body. I can't have a baby. "What shall I give my child?" I can't raise no baby. I can't have this baby. I can't take care of anybody. I'm not a murderer. I am not evil.

Katara gives up punching her stomach. She breaks down in tears. A transition occurs. A switch of lights. She is in a different time period. Pre pregnancy. Different setting, a park.

PT. 2

I usually don't speak much. Especially to people I don't know. It's hard for me to speak to people. I have the words inside my head. Its just that I don't always know how to put them together. Or like the uh- execution. Execution is always shaky. I feel like I never actually make sense, and that people just pretend to understand me. It's pretty sad. I be feeling like a child who hasn't grasped language yet. or learned to speak up. It gets me into a lot of shit. My mother says I should read more. So I try reading. Slowly at first, but more and more each day. It felt tedious, but today? I don't know it's just different today. I sat in the park and listened to the trees. And today I took my time opening the book. I started reading when I was ready. I don't know why, but it made a world of a difference. Page after page I could feel myself falling deeper and deeper into the story. I was inside the book. I forgot where I really was. It felt like nothing I had ever experienced. An interruption. Somebody was trying to bring me out of the story. They could see that I

was reading & still demanded my attention. Maybe if I give them what they ask for, they'll leave me alone.

“Ayo MA! You looking real good sitting ova here reading that book like that. What you tryna do? You on that intelligent shit I see. Real fuckin sexy.

“Thank you.”

“Can I read that with you? I'm real interested.”

“No, thank you. I don't think I can focus on what i'm reading with somebody else”

“What you stuck up or sum? I aint tryna mess with you girl. Im just trying to expand my vocabulary, y'know! Tryna expand you too.

“Im not stuck up. I just wouldn't be able to- to focus-“

“Tell me this. What makes you think that I would distract you. How you know I can't help yo ass?”

“Im not saying you couldn't help me. I just, I, don't know how to focus around people. Like I get all nervous. Its, Its not you”

“Well if its not about me, how about we go somewhere else then & I can show you this reading spot I got. Its dope. Real nice spot for focusing.

“I don't know... I felt pretty okay here. There's birds. & Its not too loud.”

“Man fuck this park. At my spot there's soft music and even dooper birds than this. Dont knock it til you try it!”

“I suppose I could check it out.”

“Alrighty then! Thats what Im talking bout. You just made the best decision of your life.”

Katara hesitantly closes their book and starts to pack up their things. She obviously doesn't want to go with this man, but she grabs her bag anyways.

“I don't even know your name. Or where you're trying to take me.”

“My name is Dick. Some people call me Richard or Richie. But I prefer Dick. Or D. D is cool.”

“Okay... and where are we going”

“Damnnn girl. What you don't believe me or sum? I need more trust and less questions”

“Okay.”

I don't know what else to say. I know I don't want to follow this man but I also know he isn't going to leave me alone. What to do? I could lose him. Or run off. But then I can't go back to the park. Or what if he chases after me? He's staring at me. He probably knows what I'm thinking. Decision. I say nothing. “A mistake.” We walk away from my precious hiding spot behind the playground and head towards the exit. We leave the park. Dick leads in front of me and I follow behind him slowly. I scan the area for an escape, some cut, a sharp turn... anything. He sees this. He slows his pace to get behind me. Fuck. We make a left turn. He can tell that I'm anxious. Small talk forms as a way to break the ice. It fails. It feels like we've been walking for 10 minutes. Another left turn. I muster up the strength to ask,

“How much farther?”

He doesn't answer. Another left turn. I ask again. No response. At this point I'm looking to the closest exit, but with D right behind me, I don't see that happening. A right turn. This turn leads into an alley. I'm confused. There is no trees, no birds, no reading spot. I stop walking and turn around. There's a gun pointing to my face, and D is holding the trigger. He orders me to give him my phone. I do. He tells me to give him my wallet and I tell him that I don't have any money. He doesn't believe me. He puts the gun on my forehead and tells me to check again or else he'll kill me. I start bawling. I have no money. I tell him I have nothing. He is silent for a moment. Then he removes the gun from my head. He says to me “Alright, you don't got no money? Fine. Take off your skirt.” I don't move. I stand frozen in disbelief. His gun remains pointed at me. I'm panicking. I have no words, I have nowhere to run. All I can think about is my book. How much I'd rather be there than here. D grabs me, and throws my body to the ground. I fall easily. I hit my head so hard that I could feel it start to bleed. Still holding the gun towards my head, he snatches off all my clothes. I feel weak. My head is bleeding and my skin is being punctured by the asphalt and rocks underneath me. I am surrounded by trash. All I can smell is garbage. D is heavy on top of me. He puts pressure on my arms and head so that I can't escape. I wonder if he sees my head bleeding. I don't think he can tell I am losing consciousness. Maybe he does know. Maybe he doesn't

care. He forces himself into me, a lot. Over and over. He's hurting me. I prayed that he'd come fast in hopes that it would be over quickly. My mind is blank. I am numb. My heart is racing. I can't move. After forever is over, he lets go of my body. He stands up and I hear his zipper close. I can not move. He leaves me there. I can't even lift my head enough to see him walk away. It feels as if all of my strength has been sucked from my body. Everything starts to slow down again. It is very bright and I can faintly hear the birds still. I passed out. Darkness. "Nobody knew where I was and now I am no longer there." When my eyes open again, I try lifting myself up. It feels like I have died. I don't feel like I'm still alive. I stand. My head screams in pain. I have no idea where I'm at or how to get home. I start walking. I passed out again.

Black out. A Transition. In a hospital.

PT. 3

The next time my eyes open I am in a hospital room surrounded by white coats. I don't know how I got there but I feel much more alive than before. There are three people talking to me at once. They want to know my age, my name, somebody they can call. Any type of information that would further identify me. I am silent. I would like to answer their questions but I can not. I am mute. Eventually, my head is wrapped and I am well enough to walk on my own again. Without any further information- the nurses have no choice but to let me go. They know something happened to me and they wish they could help me. But I tell them nothing. They can't help me. I know they can't. I called the only person who could help me. Lola. She's a little older than me but, "We real cool." We ditched school together, we stayed out late together. Lola doesn't hesitate to pick me up. She has a thousand questions waiting for me of course, and most of them I don't have the answer to. I tell her what I can remember and she stops asking me questions. She thinks I should tell my mom. I disagree. That isn't even an option for me. My mom finding out that her only daughter has been raped would be the ignition to a fire that will never stop burning. Finding out what she has been trying to protect me from my whole life actually happened to me? It would shatter her. Literally. I don't even want to think about how much I'd hear about it. Lola poses a question.

"Well what if, I don't know, What if you're pregnant?!"

It's silent for a really long time. The thought hadn't crossed my mind. I mean, I thought about it briefly in the moment, but I haven't really considered it. My mom would be devastated. I ask Lola if she would take me somewhere to get an abortion, if it came down to it. They are illegal here. And I'm a minor so that's basically impossible. Lola thinks about this for a moment then she explains to me that she could have to pay some thousands in fines and can be thrown in jail if anybody ever found out. She says no

fucking way without using any of those words. We pull up to the front of my house and both of us are at loss for what to say. I tell her thank you. She tells me good luck. I brace myself for whatever hell I am about to walk into, and open my front door. My mother is cooking like always, and she is startled when I walk into the kitchen. She is concerned when she sees me but not because I didn't come home last night, but because I haven't answered the phone.

“Where have you been Katara? I've called you a thousand times. Did you see me calling you? Did you remember that you have a mother at home who's worried about you? Do you not care about your mother so much that you will ignore her and allow her to call you a million times without even texting back or calling. HI MOM, I'M OKAY MOM. Something! Thats so fucking stupid. What if something happened to you? How am I supposed to come get you if I don't even know where and what your doing!! Don't be an idiot Katara, you should know better than to pull some shit like that.

“Hi mom. I was robbed. Somebody knocked me out and took my phone. Sorry I had you worried.”

She's silent. I start heading towards the stairs so I can go sulk in my room & then she tells me that dinner is ready. And that she's been waiting for me. A genuine gesture or an apology. I wish she just let me tell her what happened. I'm very sensitive and after everything I had just went through, I was not looking forward to her wrath. But dinner smelled amazing and she gave me a hug so it is what it is. I didn't speak much while we ate. She could tell I didn't want to talk about it. She didn't press me about what happened and I really appreciated it. I don't think I would've survived that conversation.

lights dim, a transition. Bedroom

I am turning around in my bed & thinking what Lola asked. What If I was pregnant. I can't take care of a baby right now. I'm 16. I don't even have a job. Im already knowing my mom wouldn't want me to have an abortion. She would say it's ungodly and against mother nature. She's weird like that, it wouldn't be about me and my wants and needs but about God. I never believed in God. I could never get myself to fathom that there was a higher power somewhere in the sky just watching all of us struggle, suffer, kill and die. I would think that if there was somebody out there, powerful enough to create all these people and things- they would create a world full of peace and love. They wouldn't let innocent lives be taken away. They wouldn't have created such destructive and wasteful humans. Maybe we made ourselves like that, I don't know. I just don't understand why a God that is so good and giving takes so much. If there was a God, I'd

like to speak with them. Why me? Why anybody? Why this world, with these people? Why take her life? Or his? Or theirs. What did they do to God to deserve such abrupt endings? Did they get a second chance? Forgiveness? God can't be real. If they are, they're playing a real sick game. I slept through the whole night and late into the morning. It was a Sunday so I had nothing to do. At some point I feel like somebody is standing over me. My eyes open. My mother is glaring at me, waiting for me to wake up. She wastes no time. Before I can even speak, "Already I am no longer looked at with lechery or love."

"Are you pregnant? You've been raped, I know. Don't bother lying to me, Lo told me everything"

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck Fuck.

"I said, are you pregnant Katara Marie?"

Not the middle name. I break down in tears. I don't know, I said. I don't know. My mom snatches me out of bed and carries me to her car. I am screaming and confused. She takes me to my lady doctor. Her name is Berta. She's cool I guess but she can't keep a secret for shit. She didn't even ask my mom to leave the room when talking to me. It took a while for her to get back to us, but when she did- it's exactly what I wished she wouldn't dare say. My mother broke down in tears. I was mute. That was the most embarrassed and exposed I had ever felt in my life. My mother couldn't even look at me. We drove back home in silence. When we got home, I immediately turned to go straight to my room and my mom stops me in my tracks.

"You know you can't get rid of that baby don't you? I don't know what type of plan you got, but God has a plan for that child you're bearing. There's a reason why you were chosen to walk this path."

"What do you mean chosen? What are you saying? I wasn't chosen. I was assaulted! I don't want to raise a rapists' baby!

"It's your baby! You are their mother! It's your job!"

"It's not my job! I didn't ask for this. This baby is not my path right now. This is not happening."

"Baby, it is happening, you are having that baby. And the sooner you grow up and accept the new reality you live in, the easier your life will be."

This sends me overboard. I start going off about how its my body, my choice. How frustrating it is that not only this whole world but my own mother doesn't support me and my body. I start spitting out numbers and statistics about how many young women die during unplanned pregnancy and how much Id rather kill myself than bring a life into this world unprepared.

“Sit down. Inhale. Exhale. You do not have to die on this day. I assure you death can and will wait. Death has a lot of time. Death can see you tomorrow. Or next week. Death is just down the street. Death is our most obliging neighbor & can meet you at any moment. Do not rush death. Do not wish for death. This child deserves to live. And so do you. You are not God Katara. It's not your choice who lives and who dies. Don't try to Play God. It's not your role. You need not die today. Stay here--through pout or pain. Stay. See how you feel tomorrow. Graves grow no green. Don't you remember that green's your color? You are Spring! Don't forget who you are, Katara.”

I have nothing to say. The only thing that wants to come out of my mouth is how much I don't want to go through with this. How much I despise Dick and this stupid ass baby he put inside of me. I didn't ask for this. I didn't ask for motherhood. All of this started because I wanted to read. I just wanted to be left alone to read. So that I can learn to speak better. My mother see's how discontented I am with her words and she adds on to her point...

I had a friend when I was younger. Sadie. We were neighbors. Hung out all the time. Grew up together. Senior Year comes around and everything is so new and exciting. Nobody knew this at the time, but we were both pregnant. Sadie was raped at the beginning of Summer. The last day of High School. I refused to go to college pregnant because I knew how much my family would be disappointed. “Sadie stayed at home” when I went to college, and “Sadie bore two babies.” She was happy. She has a lovely family. She was supported in her choices. I didn't have that growing up. “Abortions will not let you forget. I have heard in the wind the voices of my dim killed children. They never got a chance at life. Abortion forfeits the chance for a more enriched life. You will never neglect or beat Them, or silence or buy them with a sweet. You will never learn from them and teach them what you have learned. You will never get a chance to love unconditionally and for that love to be reciprocated. Choose life. It's evil what you're trying to do. You would murderer your own children? Don't be selfish Katara.”

Give me Liberty or give me Death, I say to her. She smacks me. I must have really pissed her off because she stormed out of my room. I can hear her crying through the walls. I don't care. This is my life. This is my body. I shouldn't be forced to do things I don't want too. And I shouldn't have to deal with the aftermath of somebody else's wrongdoing. I have to get rid of this baby. My friend wont help me, my mother wont help me, and neither will this state. I don't have a car to go somewhere else, So I'll just have to get rid of this baby on my own. In secret. I spend the next month eagerly trying to find ways to get rid of my pregnancy. I cant check out any books on it, but I am able to do research on the private web about DIY Abortions. This shit that I seen people do and talk about doing is horrifying. But necessary. I try imagining what scraping out my inside would feel like. This is terrifying to think about. I wish I could pay someone to do it for me. If you want something done, you gotta do it yourself. So I do. I start off with falling down stairs but it feels like I'm hitting my head more than my stomach. Not the best idea. I wonder why people thought this would do the trick. I end up trying everything I saw on the internet. Nothing made my stomach bleed. After many many attempts, I start to get more desperate. I still feel pregnant. I wish there was a place for people like me to go to. To be taken cared of. "There is no warm house" for me anymore. I am cold at home. My mother talks to me like I'm about to start my life over. As if I have something to get prepared for. She doesn't know how much I've hurt myself. How much I don't want to live. One night, my mother comes to me and says that we will go to the doctor tomorrow. A different doctor. Someone who can tell me how far along I am, and the next steps. I almost say to her that I already know my next steps. I hold my tongue. She leaves me alone in my room and I instantly spring up. Tonight has to be the night. After all my attempts, this has to be the one that does it. I've tried almost everything. Tonight, the stakes are higher. I have to get rid of this baby before the doctor sees me tomorrow.

I am not evil. I am not a murderer. My mother calls me selfish. She called me a murderer. She wants me to Bring life into a world that dont even care about life? No resources, guidance, or good home. I'd be a terrible mother. And this would be a terrible home. Who would want to be brought into that? I have tried everything. I drank this tea. I swallowed lye. I threw myself. I starved myself. I harmed my body. I've ruined my body. I can't have a baby. "What shall I give my child?" I can't raise no baby. I can't have this baby. I can't take care of anybody. I'm not a murderer. I am not evil. "Sit down. Inhale. Exhale." My mother's words replay in my head.

Fade to very dim light, Pre recorded voices overlap and get louder

"Abortions will not let you forget"

“You do not have to die this certain day. Death will abide, will pamper your postponement. I Assure you death will wait. Death has a lot of time. Death can attend to you tomorrow.”

“You need not die today”

“Stay”

Katara takes the wire and works it up her uterus. She is frantically trying to scrape every inch inside of her. This is the most pain she has ever been in. She lets out a scream. A full blown red wash of light is on the stage. She is bleeding out. Uncontrollably. A voice can be heard, but Katara is losing consciousness.

She sees nothing but red.

“Katara? KATARA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? Oh my god. What have you done Katara...”

Katara has bled out and Sirens can be heard from far away. It is too late. Black Out. The end.