

Dialogue: Grad student and Robbie two chairs. May 2011

(ROBBIE Enters): I'm not sure this is quite legal, talking to a grad student, but you'll be anonymous, so let's go.

She: I want to talk to you. My father was an alcoholic. He stopped when I was a kid. I didn't know he had it.

Talking about her father: He was born in '29.

Near the end of the month they had saltines, salt and sugar baked.

As he became successful, eating a lot was, was like a knee jerk reaction.

Me: My family suffered from food, lots of cancer, and eventually diabetes, but the pleasures were immense. Everybody cooked so good. The smells.

She: My mom baked bread every day.

Me: My mother 'n'em had a cafe... a classy place back then on 23rd Street ... but it was food. I don't even know if they served coffee, but they were cooking all day, greens, cornbread, chili dogs, barbecue, pound cakes, chocolate cakes, coconut cakes, biscuits and gravy, the best fried chicken in the whole wide world, I know that, nothing like it. Now they try to show our food as nasty. It was unhealthy maybe but so damn tasty, good for people who used to work hard, like a memory in the body a memory of want. Later lots of cancer too in my family,

She said: You need advocates, you need friends, diabetic friends.

I said: Yeah, my ex emailed me from Germany.

She said: I stopped eating cornstarch and glucose.

I said: My daughter is a good girl. she tells me to 'Shut up and eat'. Children are great. Unconditional love.

She wondered: Why are there disproportionate amputations among black people!

Me: I lost 2 cousins both about the age of 50. Late onset both. One had the heart, and the other 2 amputations.

She: He had his first heart attack when I was three. When I was I ten he had a pace maker, and then when I was 13 the year he died he had a pump.

Me: I had great teeth which ... went to hell after a point.

Dialogue: Me with Health Care professional having tea 4/16/11

Me: Black folks and the sugar. And the slave trade, and how essential sugar was to the economy, we always only thought of cotton.

Her: I'm working in the ER. They do things for one and not for another. Health care disparities. Doctors don't present black people w/options.

Me: As people of color we need to talk to each other still, cause many still believe we don't deserve to be healthy and happy, so much shame in sugar.

Her: I'm so glad you reminded me of the triangular slave trade. And the sugar metaphor, how it gets us from the inside/out.

Me: I had what was called a slight heart attack, had good insurance and got a stent. That doesn't always happen with Black people. Like the articles I found, and how many people know now about disparities.

Her: I believe the heart is sentient I think our eternal organs react in very sentient and energy - aware ways, but the Western medicine has not connected mind to body.

Me: And there's body memory. That memory of the possibility of hunger. Eating was wealth, was happiness
Take what you want, but eat what you take
Until today I can't leave a plate with food on it.
That's life, food around the table,
the joy of eating so much a part of life.

Her: My mother likes to tell the story of her grandfather. They cut off his foot so he couldn't run.

Me: I believe that our bodies are only a part of who we are.

Her: My mother's grandfather a slave. They cut off his foot so he wouldn't run away again, and they put him in a shed until he heeled. They had him shackled to that shed and he worked on that shackle and ran away, ran away again on one foot. Shackled him again. His wife fed him through the door, so he could run again and he worked again on the shackle. They were waiting for his foot to heal so he could get away. He got away for good. Success. A love story, a love story, a love story.

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RMc