

Perspectives

Category: Poems

written by Andrea Gordon | December 6, 2013

Andrea Gordon

She was a rainbows and unicorns girl,
predictable passions at appropriate ages.
Shy smile and just-above-average grades.

Yearly visits by the book, or, in this case,
computer screen prompts.
Milestones noted, talk about diet,
ceremonial exam, note straightness of spine.
All on track, along the mapped out course,
until an extra visit at thirteen.
Mom had called: "She's changed. I'm worried."
Is she just becoming a normal teen?

Fewer friends, no eye contact, seems upset but won't discuss.
I ask but get a bland denial, "I'm fine, now can we go?" Rolled eyes.

Grades dropping, angry outbursts, mom and I now fear the worst.
Dragged in to another visit, she stares at her skull ring, refuses to talk.
Drugs? Depression? Abuse? She haunts me
so I haunt voicemail until she's brought back.

Finally, finally, when I ask what is different
She blurts, "Me. I think I like girls." Voice is tight.
Trying not to show my relief at all the problems it's not,
I stay open-ended, ask feelings and thoughts.

But I want to say "Oh, Honey, thank goodness that's all,"
so glad she's not scarred by addiction or rape.
It's a long way to go until she might know it,
But her job now is acceptance, not repair or detox.

My perspective is skewed, my beliefs might not be hers,
but I hope she finds love without judgment
brings magic back into her world.

About the poet:

Andrea Gordon is on the faculty of the Tufts Family Medicine Residency Program at Cambridge Health Alliance in Malden, Massachusetts. "I began writing poetry in high school, but stopped due to the demands of medical school. Then, in my medical residency, I began to use writing to help process life and work. There is less time for writing now, but when I do write, it helps me to synthesize my experiences and to honor what has been shared with me."

About the poem:

“The young woman in the poem is a conglomerate of teens I have seen throughout the years. You know that there is something going on, and you fear the worst—but whatever is actually going on feels like ‘the worst’ for him or her. So I need to balance my level of concern with the patient’s level of distress—and hope that I can normalize issues like being gay to make it easier. One girl in particular is doing well and still keeps in touch with me from the West Coast, two years after she moved there, so I consider her a success story.”

Poetry editors:

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer