

Nuvole di Pennello

Paintbrush Clouds

By: Santia DePaola

The day was crisp, the sky clear. Not empty because it was painted with white clouds but it was clear. Pretty. The clouds looked like paintbrush strokes across a blue canvas. Hard lines that faded because there was no more paint left to paint with. The sky was covered in paint brush strokes. So neat, perfect, pure. Paintbrush clouds painted by the hand of nature.

Poppa didn't paint in big strokes. He paint with a small brush, little lines that swooped up to make waves or down to make rolling hills. When the hills made the brush too green, he would dip the brush in the mason jar of water and swirl it around. He did it the same every time. Dip, swirl, tap, wipe. The jar was a whirlpool of color and I would always watch it, spinning and spinning with red, yellow, blue. I wish it was a painting hanging on the wall with all the others.

The walls. The wall was colorful. The wall told a story. All the walls in the house had stories but this one had more than others because it was a wall of paintings. In the art room, Poppa covered his walls with art. The painting of the boy on the rocking horse with big polka dots behind it was the painting of Uncle Leo when he was young. It didn't look like Uncle Leo, but Poppa said it was him so it was. Or the picture of Poppa with his car years ago. We always thought it was dad because they looked just alike.

We watched him. His small strokes and the way he swirled his brush in the water and the way he frames his paintings or twisted the wire on the back. We watched him. The cats watched him. Dusty on the window sill or sprawled out on the couch or table. Her black fur smelled warm and comforting like the couch down stairs or the fuzzy blanket that you held when you were cold until you got too hot then you threw it on the ground where it stayed until Nonna folded it. Daisy would peek around the corner of the door then scurry back down stairs. Mommy cat was never around because she was scared of us.

The painting of the woman with the orange face and turban around her head, the one of a street and big buildings, blue, green, red. Art was like music in our house. Always around. Music is art, art is music. The painting of the abstract face, square, red. The painting with the butterflies on dice and a small sun, yellow, orange. The gold frame with textured edges, the simple black one, and the dark ebony one. The painting of the table with red flowers and cats all around, black, brown. The painting of the living room, the fans like flowers and the bookcase sharp like a maze. The couches looking like they drank lemon juice and the rug flat and thin. The paintings of pink, the ones of brown, the one that made sound. The painting of the jazz musicians with their saxophones and pianos.

The painting of you and me. The painting of us and we.