

Jarelynn E. Reyes
Spoken Word Poem
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“For everything that broke me, but built me.”

*Growing up I've learned that gratitude isn't always soft.
It's not always the pink bows and Hallmark cards.
Sometimes it shows up in the cracks..
in the silence between phone calls that never came
or the long nights I tucked myself in, because mommy was still at work.
the mornings that I woke up, wanted to give up but kept going anyway.*

*See, I grew up with a mom who wasn't always there,
but she was there when she had the chance to.
And that matters.
Because sometimes love isn't about being perfect,
but about how you showed up even in the storm,
with tired hands that scream “i'm tired, but i'm trying baby.”
and I saw her try every single time she could.
Between the arguments and the prayers,
she still managed to teach me how to fight..
how to stand up on my own two feet,
and still look back with love.*

*Then.. there was softball.
My first team, my first family.
Red dirt on our knees,
Dreams in our small gloves,
hearts that beat in rhythm with each other through every pitch.
We weren't just players.. we became sisters,
learning how to win with grace and lose with the fire still in our eyes.*

*That first team taught me belonging.
Trust.
To lift others up, even when your own hands were shaking.
How to believe in someone even when the scoreboard didn't.
The coaches who started off with “come on kid, you got it watch the ball.”
To “Dang look at you go girl!”*

*After, came my little siblings.
The tiny reflections, wild hearts
pieces of home that remind me what love looks like*

*before the world teaches it to hide.
They think I'm the strong one, but really.. they're my reason.
Every "I love you!" every "look sissy watch me!"
They see me as someone worth following,
so for them I try.
I try to be someone worth looking up to.
Because they're watching and their faith in me
feels like sunlight breaking through clouds.*

*Lastly, NYPD Explorers Post 23.
Structure. Silence.
A kind of strength that doesn't ask, it demands.
The early mornings, drill, all the rules
but somewhere in that order
I found pieces of myself.
Discipline turned into purpose.
I learned how to lead when my voice shook,
How to keep going when no one says "good job."
That station built walls and wings all at once.*

*Now.. looking back,
I see how every piece fits.
A mother who did her best.
A team that became a family.
The little souls who taught me how to be better.
And a program that taught me how to stand tall.*

*And me, standing here grateful for every bruise that became armor,
every lesson that came too early,
every person who showed up in their own imperfect but beautiful way.
because it all made me who I am today.
Every laugh, every loss, every lonely night.
All the prayers hidden in tears, every glove I threw down in frustration.
All the hugs from my little ones, the "you got this" from my team.
Lastly, every silent "I'm proud of you" from my moms tired eyes.. built me.*

*So this thanksgiving, I say thank you.
For the love that came late,
for the lessons that came hard,
and the strength that came from it all.
Because I am who I am,
not in spite of it all,
but because of it.*

