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## Who Has Stolen the Kids Away?

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## Who Has Stolen the Kids Away?

### Author Bio

Julián Sánchez-Melchor is a Religious Studies major at Gettysburg College, class of 2024, focusing his study on Christianity, Indigenous Acknowledgment, and Writing. In his work, he writes to capture the joys and struggles of his life as a queer Mexican-American of indigenous descent. Julián has incredible pride in being a person of color and in his heritage. His art also reflects how his life has been shaped by Schizoaffective Disorder, a disability containing the symptoms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

# Who Has Stolen the Kids Away?

JULIÁN SÁNCHEZ-MELCHOR

I thought I saw him,  
at the corner of my vision.  
The lanky fearsome demon  
my parents professed  
would rob me deep at night.  
El Coco, El Cucuy,  
with his clawed hands  
that sweep the misbehaved  
right off the street.  
But it was just a lamp,  
a tall dark post,  
which my mind had morphed  
into this apparition:  
a lost lonely man.

*Ama*, I thought you said,  
I could have sworn you said,  
only bad boys and girls  
get taken by monsters.  
You promised.  
You hugged my littlest finger with yours,  
caressed my head,  
and claimed, “there’s no need to worry.”  
But Mother, I am worried.  
Who has stolen the kids away?

I’ve been good.  
I’ve been doing so well.  
I feel happy.  
I feel seen, and I believe  
I’m someone to be proud of.  
Yet night and night again,

with tears and breathy moans,  
I desperately implore!  
Why, Mother, why  
are there still monsters  
chasing after me?

I hear whispers that fuse with spirit,  
form soul.  
Innumerable imagined horrors  
creep out the damages in my heart,  
tap my spine,  
then shred into my root nerve  
swimming straight to my brain,  
and in disability,  
I (almost) crumble.

*Ama*, I know monsters  
aren't real.  
That I can comprehend,  
so I must ignore my dreams  
and my mind.  
Reason suggest delusion  
is just a passing nightmare.  
Yet that doesn't end my sobbing.  
Beyond the confines of my walls  
the acts of our neighbors  
are even scarier than demons.

Who has stolen my father away?  
Locked him in a cell,  
deemed him an alien,  
and shipped him south-west,  
yet he was born  
*American*.

Who has stolen our sisters away?  
An unfathomable amount of women  
kidnapped, trafficked, and killed  
year after year after decades after  
*centuries*.  
Who has stolen the kids away?

Sent them off to boarding school,  
cut their precious black hair,  
and buried them one after another  
in a cold unmarked grave,  
rotting away  
*unremembered.*

Mother, as I grew, you warned,  
“We are not assured to be together.”  
I thought you dramatic,  
but being close to grown,  
I think I understand.  
And still you say it  
each time we sit and eat,  
but please,  
lie to me anew.  
Say it will be alright.  
Even though the innocent  
have been stolen,  
and the monsters have stolen  
my innocence away.

I live in fear in my imagination.  
We live in fear in our reality,  
and I'm left to wonder.  
Who has stolen the kids away?  
Who has stolen the kids away?  
Who has stolen...