

Rewrite of Aristotle and Dante Discovers the Secrets of the Universe

Chapter 4 - on Dante's perspective

Just like any other day during that baking summer, I went swimming in the Memorial Park pool. The only thing that I hated there was that we had to take a shower, it was one of the rules. Not that I don't like taking showers, no, but using public ones is just not my thing. I don't like the feeling that people are staring at me, even though they are not, just being there feels like I'm being watched. But anyway, I took the shower the fastest that I could and jumped right into the pool.

When I feel the water hitting on my face I finally feel relieved. It was one of the hottest days of the summer and the water is like a refuge to me. I have always liked to swim, ever since I was a little kid my parents put me in swimming classes and I have never stopped swimming, even when I left the classes. I just love how the water feels against my skin and how it sustains me floating. And swimming itself is so fun. I have gotten really good at it because of all of my years of practice.

Today was another normal day at the pool. And just like any other day the lifeguards were more interested in looking at the girls breasts than watching a group of little kids as they were supposed to.

I heard one of them say "A girl is like a tree covered with leaves. You just want to climb up and tear all those leaves off."

The other lifeguard said laughing, "You're an asshole."

"Nah, I'm a poet, a poet of the body."

And then they both busted out laughing.

After that I looked around the pool searching for someone who needed help, because those lifeguards were clearly not doing their job. That was when I found a boy. A boy that was floating all by himself. It didn't seem like he knew how to swim, nor that he had someone to teach him. So I swam closer to him.

"I can teach you how to swim." I said.

He moved over to the side of the pool and stood up in the water, squinting into the sunlight. I then sat down on the edge of the pool. He looked at me suspiciously. But he didn't answer. In fact, it looked like he was in deep thought. So I asked again.

"I can teach you how to swim, if you want."

Again he looked at me like he was thinking about something.

"You talk funny," he finally said.

"Allergies," I said

"What are you allergic to?"

"The air," of course I wasn't allergic to it but that made him laugh so it was worth it.

"My name's Dante," I said.

That made him laugh even harder. "Sorry," he said.

"It's okay. People laugh at my name."

"No, no," he said. "See, it's just that my name's Aristotle."

My eyes lit up. That could not be possible, could it? I looked at him like I was ready to listen to every word he was about to say.

"Aristotle," he repeated. Then we both kind of went a little crazy. Laughing.

"My father's an English professor," I said.

"At least you have an excuse. My father's a mailman. Aristotle is the English version of my grandfather's name." And then he pronounced his grandfather's name with this really formal Mexican accent, "Aristotiles. And my real first name is Angel." And then he said it in Spanish, "Angel."

“Your name is Angel Aristotle?”

“Yeah. That’s my real name.”

We laughed again. We couldn’t stop. We were just two boys with names out of our era laughing at our own disgrace.

“I used to tell people my name was Dan. I mean, you know, I just dropped two letters. But I stopped doing that. It wasn’t honest. And anyway, I always got found out. And I felt like a liar and an idiot. I was ashamed of myself for being ashamed of myself. I didn’t like feeling like that.” I shrugged my shoulders.

“Everyone calls me Ari,” he said.

“Nice to meet you, Ari.”

He looked at me like I had said something that made him really happy.

“Okay,” he said, “teach me how to swim.”

And that’s what I did. I taught him everything about the movements of arms and legs and breathing, how a body functioned while it was in the water. I taught him for several days that summer, and even after he got the hang of it we continued to meet everyday at the pool to swim and read comics and books and argue about them. I loved my father’s old Superman comics while he was definitely not a fan. One day we were talking about Archie and Veronica and he said he hated that shit. “It’s not shit,” I said.

He liked Batman, Spider-Man, and the Incredible Hulk.

“Way too dark,” I said.

“This from a guy who loves Conrad’s Heart of Darkness.”

“That’s different,” I said. “Conrad wrote literature.”

And then we entered on another argument if comic books were literature too. Of course they are not. I take literature very seriously just like my father taught me to. And I always won our debates on that matter, he even read Conrad’s books because of me. “I hate it” he said “Except, it’s true. The world is a dark place. Conrad’s right about that.”

“Maybe your world, Ari, but not mine.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he said.

“Yeah, yeah,” I said.

But I didn’t believe him. I think that he in fact loved the book. Someone like him would obviously like Conrad. He was darker than I was. I told him that he had a tragic vision of life “That’s why you like Spider-Man.”

“I’m just more Mexican,” he said. “Mexicans are a tragic people.”

“Maybe so,” I said.

“You’re the optimistic American.”

“Is that an insult?”

“It might be,” he said.

We laughed. We always laughed.

We weren’t alike, Ari and I. But we did have a few things in common. For one thing, neither one of us was allowed to watch television during the day. Our parents didn’t like what television did to a boy’s mind. We’d both grown up with lectures that sounded more or less like this: You’re a boy! Get out there and do something! There’s a whole world out there just waiting for you . . .

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

ORIGINAL

- Ari thinks of himself as someone dark and unfriendly
- Ari does not like to take showers with guys
- Ari went to the pool as a favor to his mom

BOTH

- Ari is kind of dark but Dante likes him that way
- Both characters don't like public bathrooms
- Both characters went to the pool that day

MINE

- Dante sees Ari as a light on his life
- Dante doesn't like people staring at him
- Dante loves to swim

ELABORATE

In the original version, Ari describes himself as someone quiet who doesn't like to make new friends, that is also dark and likes dark things. "I was darker than he was. And I'm not just talking about our skin coloring." When he meets Dante he starts to become more open and communicative, making Dante see him as a friend. In my version, Dante doesn't have lots of friends because he is shy, so having Ari in his life was really a sun on a cloudy day. "We laughed. We always laughed."

Both characters don't like to take showers in public bathrooms. On Ari's version (original version), he is uncomfortable because of the guys in the shower, he does not have anything to say to them so he feels like he doesn't belong there. "Guys in the shower. Not my thing." But in Dante's version (my version), he is more preoccupied about people staring at him, since he has always been a shy boy that does not have many friends, and he doesn't like to be the center of attention. "I don't like the feeling that people are staring at me, even though they are not, just being there feels like I'm being watched."

In the original version, Ari only went to the pool that day because his mom insisted that he needed to get out of his house and make some friends. In my version, Dante always goes to the pool, since swimming is one of his favorite things to do. Coincidentally, he was in the pool the same day as Ari. "I just love how the water feels against my skin and how it sustains me floating. And swimming itself is so fun."