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## Streetnotes

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Taking on the City: one Mom at a Time

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Momchedjikova, Blagovesta

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# Taking on the City: One Mom at a Time

**Blagovesta Momchedjikova**

**Abstract**

These three poems express the challenges of an urban mom to see the city despite, and through, her kids' perspective.

### Public Art with Kids

7 year old: You come here for THIS?  
6 year old: You are taking a PICTURE of it?  
Mom: YES! See these pressed, rusty TINS on the side of that building?  
That's actually an artwork... It's HUGE!  
6 year old: YUCK!  
7 year old: It's UGLY!  
Mom: And the broken MIRRORS among the TINS? They reflect the sky  
and the clouds and the buildings across, but kind of also distort  
them...Broken Bridge II...  
7 year old: BROKEN??? It's UGLY and it's BORING.  
6 year old: There is no BRIDGE here!  
7 year old: I want to go!  
6 year old: You said there's ICE-CREAM on this SKYLINE. WHERE is it?  
Mom: HIGHLINE, sweetheart...it's called the Highline...

### A Playground Perspective

As I lift  
my eyes  
to meet the walking  
signal on  
Fulton  
and orchestrate  
the crossing  
of my 2  
toddlers  
on mini  
scooters  
and my  
mom freshly  
jetlagged  
from Europe,  
I see you  
running a  
red light  
to wherever  
your GPS  
tells you  
I live  
now, and  
scream  
your name.  
You slow  
down,  
honk,  
and make  
a U-turn.  
It's been  
11 years  
since we  
last loved

each other.  
What  
business  
do we have  
meeting up  
in the  
up-and-coming  
area of  
Clinton Hill,  
Brooklyn?  
You: an  
ex-husband  
and father of 3;  
Me: a wife  
and mother of 2?  
We enter  
the playground  
on Classon and Fulton,  
where  
mosquitoes hit  
the swings before  
kids do.  
Cars rumble by  
occasionally;  
drug addicts  
and drunkards  
lean on  
the sides  
of bodegas –  
it is a lazy  
morning  
in late May,  
on the border  
of BedStuy.  
Swiftly,  
2 cops chase  
an undesirable  
(a lonely guy  
slouching on  
a lonely  
playground  
bench) away.  
You stand  
tall and  
funny as  
you once did –  
perhaps

a little  
provincial  
with your  
cowboy  
hat on –  
which looked  
so cool in  
Blagoevgrad where  
we first met,  
probably cool  
in Maine where  
you come from,  
but so uncool  
in Brooklyn.  
I stand at  
a reasonable  
distance –  
close enough  
to hear your  
jokes and  
laugh  
but far  
enough  
to not feel  
small and protected  
the way I  
once did,  
lest some  
other energy  
runs through  
me – like  
fire – from the  
tips of your  
hair into  
mine –  
we know  
how trouble  
comes on –  
before we  
know it,  
it has burned  
us both down,  
like that  
trash can  
on the corner  
across  
that became

ashes  
in no time.  
Who set  
it on fire?  
And why  
nobody  
bothered  
to put it  
out?  
You teach  
my kids  
how to  
scooter  
safely  
down a ramp,  
and slide  
faster  
down a slide;  
you exchange  
cleaning tips  
(the steam mop,  
the robot cleaner)  
with my mom.  
She too  
laughs at  
your jokes  
but in  
moderation –  
she is,  
after all,  
the mother-in-law  
of another.  
Later,  
you drive us  
home a few`  
blocks away:  
my little boys  
sitting in the  
booster seats  
of your, older, boys –  
could these  
have been  
our kids?  
As you  
fumble  
with your  
GPS,

which will  
take you  
away from here  
away from me,  
for another  
10 years, maybe,  
I wonder:  
What if  
I stay  
in this car  
with you,  
to live the life  
I did not,  
but once  
so wished I  
did?  
Will I  
learn something  
new  
about  
love?  
You taught  
me that love  
was  
all about  
leaving...  
and so  
the first guy  
who stayed,  
I married  
doubting  
his love  
since...  
With a new  
destination  
on your GPS  
screen, and  
after a friendly  
goodbye  
you hesitate  
for a bit  
then drive  
away  
aware perhaps  
perhaps not  
that  
there is



always  
something  
uneasy  
between a man  
and a woman,  
especially  
in up-and-coming  
neighborhoods,  
on lazy  
spring mornings,  
despite the  
presence of  
children...  
...or because of it.  
Love  
is all about  
staying.

**An Urban Child Aspires...**

with Moussa Toni and Malick Mikayil Cisse

A famous story writer  
a fearless fire fighter

an expert Bay-blade spinner  
a brave hockey game winner

an awesome basketball player  
a fearsome dragon slayer

a classical music composer  
a picture day perfect poser

an amazing knockout singer  
a soccer team's best left-winger

a swift Christmas gift wrapper  
a talented NYC rapper

a Lego Chima spy  
a cool and funny guy

is all I want to be

but adults ask me  
which ONE  
specifically?

all of these plus  
the driver of a magic bus

the master of the silent fart  
the wizard of profound dirt art

the inventor of the no-stain shirt  
the creator of on-demand burp

a Ninja turtle drawer  
a fine paper plane thrower

an origami specialist  
a Kung Fu gold medalist

a chocolate tester  
a hilarious jester

a famed first-class Brooklyn rock star  
with a glow-in-the-dark guitar

or simply a good, smart boy...  
... and designer of my  
best friend's favorite toy!

### **About the author**

Blagovesta Momchedjikova takes on the city two boys at a time, whether ice-skating in Prospect Park or strolling on the Highline. To get some writing done, she wakes up early in the morning, when the only sounds around are those of cars speeding down Nostrand Avenue or drunkards singing and cursing on their way home. It is thus that she managed to edit the volumes *Captured by the City: Perspectives in Urban Culture Studies* (CSP 2013) and *Urban Feel* (Streetnotes 2010). By day she teaches writing at New York University.