

Self-Inquiry before the Job Interview

By Gary Soto

Did you sneeze?

Yes, I rid myself of the imposter inside me.

Did you iron your shirt?

Yes, I used the steam of mother's hate.

Did you wash your hands?

Yes, I learned my hygiene from a raccoon.

I prayed on my knees, and my knees answered with pain.

I gargled. I polished my shoes until I saw who I was.

I inflated my résumé by employing my middle name.

I walked to my interview, early,

The sun like a ring on an electric stove.

I patted my hair when I entered the wind of a revolving door.

The guard said, For a guy like you, it's the 19th floor.

The economy was up. Flags whipped in every city plaza

In America. This I saw for myself as I rode the elevator,

Empty because everyone had a job but me.

Did you clean your ears?

Yes, I heard my fate in the drinking fountain's idiotic drivel.

Did you slice a banana into your daily mush?

I added a pinch of salt, two raisins to sweeten my breath.

Did you remember your pen?

I remembered my fingers when the elevator opened.

I shook hands that dripped like a dirty sea.

I found a chair and desk. My name tag said my name.

Through the glass ceiling, I saw the heavy rumps of CEOs.

Outside my window, the sun was a burning stove,

All of us pushing papers

To keep it going.

Source: Poetry