

Nydia Ecury



No Matter What

THE BIRTHMARK RAN FROM HALFWAY MY LEFT EYELID UP TO THE EYEBROW. It was jet black and had some bristles on it. I had given it a name: “Bomba-wowo”, which in our native language is more or less a combination of wasp and eye. I don’t remember why or when the name started, but the birthmark must have been very important to merit a name of its own earlier than my memory can trace back.

One dark night after the grownups had had supper, we were hanging around telling our father what kind of day we had had. We little ones — I must have been about five — had already had our supper earlier. We were such a large family, a grand total of fifteen, that we ate in two shifts.

It was not only dark, it was also raining very hard and there was a lot of thunder and lightning. My siblings shivered with every flash, but I found it more interesting than frightful.

My father held me as an example to the others, saying: “Look at this brave girl now. She is not afraid of thunder and lightning.”

Then he drew me on his knee and said to me: “And what is more, you are the only one with a bomba-wowo.”

“Do you like it?” I asked.

He threw his head back and laughed. “Like it? Much more than that, because I can always find you, should you ever get lost. I’ll just go from door to door and ask if they have seen a little girl with a ‘bomba-wowo’, for she is mine!”

“What if it is dark like now?” I wondered.

“I’ll carry a lantern”, he answered.

“What if it’s raining hard like tonight?” was my next question.

“I’ll carry an umbrella”, he said, “but I shall not rest until I find you. No matter what.”

So the birthmark which was a means of identification, also gave me my identity then and there. For if someone was going to go to all that trouble to find you, you must be a very special person, right?

Much much later, medical advice had it that I ought to have the birthmark removed. You never know which way birthmarks might go. Cancer and all that...

I decided to have it done for safety’s sake, but while undergoing the operation I felt disloyal and

wondered if my father would still be able to find me.

A tear trickled down my face.

"It cannot possibly hurt", the surgeon said.

"It doesn't", I answered.

"So what are you crying about", he wanted to know.

"The gift of my identity", I answered.

He shrugged his shoulders and threw the thing in the waiting enamel basin. White. Cold.

My father is gone into the long night.

The child is gone into the woman I became.

The woman and the child still remember his love and wisdom and feel all warm inside whenever they do.

No matter what!

