

Behave by Gina Vucci

Serve the guests. Don't cry. Take your brother for a walk. Your father was such an incredible man. Your father loved you. You were his favorite. *I'll just let everyone else cry while I learn to live with this feeling in the pit of my stomach.* Leave her alone. It's fine if she wants to wear her red velvet dress from last Christmas. She can wear what she wants to the funeral. Touch his hand; it's the last time you'll ever see him. *I don't know you, but I can't stop sobbing in your arms.*

Take care of your brother. Did you make dinner? Did your brother do his homework? Have you given him a bath? You need to behave for your mother. You need to put your brother to bed. *We'll just sit here on the stairs in the dark where no one can see us through the windows and wait until someone comes home.* Have you made a grocery list? Did you load the dishwasher? Did you empty the dishwasher? Have you fed your brothers? Be quiet, Mom's resting. Make your brother's lunch. Is your brother's uniform clean? Get your brother dressed. Is your brother attached to your hip? I never see you without your brother on your hip. Your mother is very sick; you need to be a good girl for her.

Monsignor Kennedy said no clapping in church. People who don't believe in Jesus go to Purgatory. *Is my father in Purgatory?* God's watching; He knows everything you're thinking and everything you do. This gold pin is the size of babies' feet when they're killed in an abortion. Jesus was perfect, even as a child. Be like Jesus. Better yet, be like the Virgin Mary. Jesus died for you. Focus on what you do wrong, not others. You are a sinner. Ten Hail Marys and 5 Our Fathers. *I can't stand the smell of that smoke. What is that smoke?* Turn the other cheek. There are children starving in Africa. You should be grateful for what you have. *Grateful? Do you even see me suffering?* You need to behave for your mother.

Gina Vucci is an author, advocate, single mom and survivor of domestic violence. She is a lover of people and the planet, passionate about intervening on behalf of those in need. She takes her calling seriously, herself, less so. She lives in San Rafael and is in the Adult Degree Completion Program at Dominican University.