I Use Commas like Ninja Stars

by Sam Nam

my foreign mouth embarrassed the teachers. my jumbled words gave people sad faces. so wrong these words of mine. even the mentally retarded girl would not talk to me. just looking at my garbled mouth made her slap herself. and my writing. oh no. my writing made the teachers cry. shaking their heads. all the time.

silly grown-ups. don't make such a big deal. why is it so important. i can point. i can show this. i can tell this. nothing wrong with my words. oh but the teachers they no likey. they say I need help. They give me special time with special teacher. First teach me the word shame please. Make me say it over and over. There is no religion without language. There is no community without language. There is no future without language. Give me the fat book. I will own it. I will throw it at my funny-tongued folks. Dic-shun-ary, Ma. The-sor-us, Pa.

Please give me American words, Special Teacher Lady. Oh, how I like you. You smell different than my mom. She smells like baked fish. You smell like Juicy Fruit. Give me American fully, my Special Teacher Lady. Give it to me flush on the face. English? English is for pansies. Give me American! Give me American like McDonalds cheese! Give me American like the truck commercials! Show me where to drop the F-bombs. Show me how to impregnate pauses. Let me study one slice of your drawl, so I can steal the covetous pace of your words. I want to slurp the phrases straight out of your mouth and make them dance prettily in my mind.

Look, Ma; semicolons are cool! Look, Pa: This is a colon! Punctuation is power!!! Pow, pow!!!

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/sam-nam/i-use-commas-like-ninja-stars»*
Copyright © 2009 Sam Nam. All rights reserved.

I give you stripes, Captain U.S.A. =USA=

I give you wings, Miss Butterfly. ~Butterfly~

I give you mountains, Mountain Man. ^^Man^^

I give me possibilities, Mr. Me. I help Ma with cooking directions. I laugh at Pa for smoking next to the No Smoking sign. I take my English lessons and hide them in my room. They're mine. All mine. I don't want my words corrupted. I speak less and less at home. Grammar is provincial, and my parents are foreign invaders. They live between countries but in the same house. My mom's broken words embarrass me in front of my friends. My dad is a monument to a country I never want to know. I must escape. Hello, college. I'm never looking back.

Now I own American words and pawn their configurations for money. I use commas like ninja stars. I smirk at people and correct them. You mean "nauseated," not "nauseous," right? Hehe. I go through life with words like razor blades, and everything is fine, until what? What Ma? I can't understand you? Speak slowly. Did you say … Did you say … Pa is dead?

God pressed Backspace on Pa, and now Ma is all that's left of their in-between land. She's lonely. She lives in a country of one. She lies around her house like a forgotten keepsake. I find her body in random places: sitting behind the couch, sleeping in the tub, standing in the garage. I visit her as often as I can, but she treats me like a tourist. She's hospitable, but she knows we're different. She knows I'll leave soon. So I empty my pockets. I drop the commas, the; semicolons — the)(parentheses, the q"uo"tations, and the @s+erisk. I strip myself of my weapons .$% and stand before her #! [totally] {disarmed}.

look ma we talk same. we have us. always always. i promise