



dáyquiri

LITTLE POEMS
BY HELDÁY DE LA CRUZ

*This is a small collection of poetry and notes that span
ages twenty-three to thirty. It holds the evolution of this period of
time in words. Influenced by family, friends, lovers, and peers.
Perhaps even yourself.*

Thank you for all of your love.

pa' mi mamá, mi corazón

-

for my mother, my heart

TABLE OF CONTENTS

this is you at twenty-three	06
watermelon seeds	08
first date	09
niñez	10
sleep paralysis, age 7	11
dáyquiri	12
devotion	13
before Oceti Sakowin: words from my mother	14
a note from Standing Rock	15
on learning to be less dependent	16
things to tell Rashiki	17
my brother, my guide	18
hypnopompia (3:31 am)	19
ni de aqui, ni de alla	20
first therapy appointment	22
drunken thoughts	23
to my heart, I'm sorry I lied to you	24
letter to david	25
therapy (two years later)	26
devotion (part II)	27
sangre mia	28
this is for you, lover	29
existential dread doubles down	30
moon man	31
Clara	32

this is you at twenty-three

this is you at twenty-three,
you live in a one-hundred square foot
studio in downtown Portland,
you are a full-time student paying
for college out of pocket,
you have two part-time jobs and
work seven days a week, all of your
friends seem to have slipped away
because you're always too busy,
but you still love them very much

this is you at twenty-three,
you've decided to go by the correct
pronunciation of your name,
you're tired of having to explain
the americanized version,
you're tired of having to make
people feel comfortable around you,
taking back your name felt
one hundred times better than
you thought it would,
like the time your mother started
learning English ten or so years ago
and she asked you, "where?" instead of
"donde?" and you were so proud

this is you at twenty-three,
if things work out, you will be
illustrating a children's book this summer
and finally doing what you want to do,
your parents sacrificed so much for you,
remember to make them proud,
that's the only thing worth doing

you had a dream that your father was
dead and woke up crying like a child,
you really should call your father more

this is you at twenty-three,
you haven't had sex in six weeks,
you haven't smoked a cigarette in four weeks,
you haven't had a drink in two weeks,
you make a lot of to-do lists and have 6 am
alarms, you should really sleep more

this is you at twenty-three,
you are in love with the girl you met on
the bus last summer, you recently spotted her
paintings from the other side of the gallery,
she only wears black and loves discussing
death just as much as you, and now
you're meeting up for coffee

this is you at twenty-three,
you are in love with the boy you're
too shy to meet, you drew his hands,
large and worked, he has a terrible sense of
humor online, but he seems to like you,
maybe you should introduce yourself already

watermelon seeds

this building carries years of smells,
trapped in ghostly long halls,
cheeses, chocolates, tomatoes, fish,
nothing escapes from winter to fall

only the smallest critters
slip through cracks to get inside,
high on odorous clashings
spiders and ants marching with pride

but it's late at night when the
little watermelon seeds make their debut,
hiding in your pillows, your mattress,
waiting for nightfall, to then come into view

a new protective ritual begins,
armoring your body for the night,
slipping into old sweats, tucking in your shirt,
they never bite when they see the light

your torso is vulnerable, but
nothing like your face,
all the red spots on your body were
just beginning to fade away,

surroundings feel infested, too
broke to get another pillow,
another bed, another apartment,
not to mention the rent you still owe

first date

we met at that record sale in late August,
and you kissed me at the bus stop,
I wanted to hold your thoughts longer,
not ready to leave you just yet

my fingers sang circles
on the back of your knee,
I must have summoned a tornado,
dizzy and unpredictable

you moved me with your winds
and your calculations,
growing into yourself,
expanding the arms of your universe

the stars and the light,
and maybe even the black hole
that will twist me into nothing
and swallow me whole

niñez

*niño pequeño llamado morenito
pelo tan grande que se dobla en el mismo
y en sus chinos se traga la luz*

*ya un hombrecito, esto es lo que es aprender,
manos que empiezan a parecerse
a las de tu papa, con dolor y aprendizajes*

*viejo sabio, los caminos que aun vienen,
tanto que has guardado, tanto que te falta saber,
el amor de tu mama siempre te esta llamando*

tender child called brown,
hair so wild it gets lost in itself,
curls swallow the sun's light

young boy, this is what it means to learn,
hands that look like your father's
holding the hurt and the lessons

old man, the paths that are yet to come,
so much you have held, so much to know,
your mother's love is calling you

sleep paralysis, age 7

hurried niños slip into
the mouth of the mattress,
it salivates and licks itself
with its serpent tongue

in the morning you'll speak
if the serpent lets you go,
it folds your arms and you
let out a full body scream

invisible sound escapes you,
the serpent swallows your voice,
the mattress chews your bones,
and the morning light watches

then you bolt out of sleep,
unable to catch your breath,
the serpent has spit you out,
disoriented and free

dáyquiri

*mi rey, mi rey mago
me decia mi mama,
por ver nacido
el seis de enero*

*quiri quiridáy,
quiri dáyquiri,
asi me dice mi prima
desde que era pequeño*

*rojo, negro, cafe, blanco,
los cuatro caballos corren
a los cuatro puntos
del mundo, mijo*

*las coronas derretidas,
un oro fue mezclado,
quien sabe, pero ahora
tu eres parte de eso*

devotion

my bones chose you,
just before my tongue spoke,
so tell me why we didn't hold,
tumbled down until we broke

the light bounced off your face,
when I lit myself on fire,
I must have startled your thoughts,
a consuming and distorted desire

it hurts to see the end
so clearly from the start,
a warning so easily ignored,
when you only listen to the heart

before Oceti Sakowin: words fom my mother

*Bueno,
si te vas a meter en eso,
dale sin miedo, mijo*

Well,
if you're going to get involved,
do it without fear, mijo

-

Written on a sticky note:

*If I should get arrested or detained by police while at
Standing Rock and things get complicated, please contact
the following people: my partner, my brother, my mother, my
lawyer friend (K) and tell her I'll take her up on her offer, she
should be expecting your call.*

a note from Standing Rock

the drumming of a thousand hearts,
halted by robotic buzzing drones
heavy with opposition and intimidation,
change the anger to peace within my body

Water Protectors clashed with police on Sunday,
a young woman may have lost her arm,
just before the painful thanksgiving holiday,
they will never admit they threw the grenade

in the meeting dome, a class comes to a close
when word gets around that a teepee has caught
fire, an accident, an attack from police, we cannot
know in that moment

brush strokes in the hot sun spell out Free Red Fawn,
but now the cold creeps in, the grass begins frosting in
the shade, a white parent with dreads lets her child
run through the signs, ruining hours of work

this the coldest this body has ever felt,
tired and alive, so this is what it's like
to be amidst injustice after injustice,
pushing forward no matter the speed

on learning to be less dependent

my favorite houseplant,
I am overwatering you, again,
slowly overflowing your pot
with what I thought you needed

you once stood tall and green,
happy to see me in the room,
but now your body droops
in an arc, unable to keep up

I've done this before, you know
hoping more and more helps,
quietly damaging your leaves,
curling into brown edges

things to tell Rashiki

1. Expectation is the root of
all heartache (Shakespeare)
2. You can't make homes out of
human beings (Warsan Shire)
3. Your vision sometimes fogs
when you're full of adoration
4. Never let yourself be defined
by another individual
5. Remember to listen and
validate other people's feelings
outside of your experience
6. Vulnerability is a
powerful bridge
7. Don't give all of your time
to one person
8. Give all the love you can
while you can

my brother, my guide

I knew who you were in my dream,
came back from hell and forced a smile,
but you knew, you always seem to

you put your hand on my shoulder,
said you could see it in my eyes,
that we are connected by blood

I ran to my father begging him to tell me,
tell me where we come from,
who we are, who we were

venemos de las montañas, he would say,
the origin of us lost in time,
we find each other with our hearts

hypnopompia (3:31 am)

I've experienced earthquakes that never took place, I have seen silhouettes watching me sleep through my window, I have woken up my partner to tell him there is someone in the yard, I saw them, I have exploded out of sleep paralysis sitting upright gasping for air, I have seen faces in my sheets, thousands of ants crawling in my bed, and heard many knocks at my door, I have been confronted by three people at a time, taunting me, they don't exist, they have sat at the edge of my bed, reaching out to me slowly as I shake my head with my eyes half open, my mouth falling to the side unable to form words or much less a sound, they tell me they are here to help me, they tell me they are here to take me away, faceless border security guards, their presence has made me wake up to my own screaming in the middle of the night.

ni de aqui, ni de alla

too brown for the white folks,
and too white for the brown folks,
I exist in the space in between,
towering here, but made small there

in school I learned that
a group of giraffes is called a tower,
at home it is also true that a group
of *primos* is a “*bola de cabrones*”

I’m switching languages mid-sentence,
talking shit with my *abuelita*,
a veces se me quema la tortilla,
and I’m afraid of *El Cucuy* in two worlds

I’m changing with the moon,
something new and familiar,
a deep awakening of my
old roots in my tender hips

the needles of the Doug fir
stand tall and sincere,
las espinas del nopal también,
sharp like *mi ‘ama* y *mi ‘apa*’s tears

I grew from the sagebrush,
my mother’s sweat out in the fields,
her magic, the *maiz*, the hot sky,
the melanoma spreading from her heel

I grew from the watermelons,
dripping sweetly in the sun,
my father had one thousand dreams,
what would they be if they could become?

I was shaped into their American flag,
setting itself on fire,
I was the Mexican flag too,
a struggle, a memory, a desire

I carry a heavy pride in my name,
the way my mother said it the first
time she held her baby boy
small hand clinging to her collarbone

now I comb her hair in the hospital,
pills, IVs, beeping machines,
we hold hands and close our eyes,
sharing dreams while we sleep

and I wondered about Benja's funeral,
my father as the flowers on his grave,
unable to say goodbye *por los putos papeles*,
we are left with the only love we crave

first therapy appointment

forty-five minutes feels like five minutes,
my therapist looks overwhelmed,
we identified my fears and insecurities

drunken thoughts

In this moment, I want to sit and see what
bubbles to the surface,
In this moment, there's a disconnect between
this body and mind,
In this moment, it's a race to know which is
moving first
In this moment, I think of my tios, the ones
I only knew in a drunken state
In this moment, I ask myself what I want the
most in this world
In this moment, I question whether I truly
know how to love

to my heart, I'm sorry I lied to you

maybe it's this skin,
or knowing where to find rejection,
but the only place I found honesty
was in my lonely skepticism

what is it that I wanted,
I have to keep asking, because
it changes: less, more, nothing,
until it all falls apart

I used to believe so many things,
but the years make you wise,
responsible for your own heart,
often times you get caught in the flames

when all you want is to want,
you get swept in the air,
I'm sorry that I lied to you,
I'll protect you now with both hands

letter to david

sweet boy, I hope that you feel my love
piercing through the earth, down in the
treasures of the ground where your body
lies, days after I lost you, my head was still
throbbing, my heart continually ablaze. it
is an impossible feeling, one that cannot be
verbalized or even mended. an open wound
that two years later I still learn to live with.

sweet boy, I thank the stars for letting me
be with you in those moments, to kiss you
on your thirtieth, and tell you how much I
love you. Isn't it wild how we spent ten years
getting to know each other, finally found a
moment in time and space to explore that
romance, and in the midst of it all there's a
cancer growing. I keep asking myself all the
whys - but I've been here before and it's sharp
like a knife into my side knowing there's no
control.

sweet boy, you had so much art to make, so
much love to give, thank you for giving so
many years of your presence, energy, and
love, for being so incredible in this life, it's like
the song we sang together, almost like it was
meant for us in some way. you had a way of
knowing, of having things connect, weave,
pull together in your life, I'm lucky to have
been a part of it, and I'll wear the ring you
gave me four years ago, forever, querido, I see
you everyday on my hand, and I carry you in
my chest.

therapy (two years later)

the depth of your power is endless,
I've seen you flow with the grace of water,
strike like a vigilant scorpion, and even
sit with the silence of death

if you walk in the darkness
long enough, you'll find your way
back to the candle you left burning,
now melted, changing, dancing

your gift is that of comfort,
giving and learning to receive,
greeting with your heart, your eyes,
there's a lot in you that's unfolding

it's harder to feel hurt when you
know who you are, and remember that
who you are is always becoming, you'll
learn when to rush, slow down, or step away

devotion (part II)

take all of this worth,
bundled and spreading,
gift it back to yourself

sparks that were promised:
fairytale love and hot passion,
can only exist sometimes

hard to learn and even harder
to unlearn, it all unravels
into tiny glowing truths

they ask for your attention,
why are you always giving
yourself away, baby?

slow the chase sometimes
and dare to keep yourself,
hold it all intact now

a strong-willed devotion
to your core, that builds
in the most honest way

see now, the most beautiful
thing you can do is to fully give
yourself back to you

sangre mia

welcome to earth, the
flow of time is now your river,
a steady wave of chaos
weaves knowingly through you

infant eyes yawn quietly,
piercing the root of the soul
whispering a kind of wisdom
into both the future and past

this gentle attachment,
a union of profundity and stillness,
reminds us that others' memories
exist eternally bound to ours

and when your knees are weak,
when your tongue is dry,
look back into your dreams,
that's the realm we all go

simply loved into existence,
listen to the vibration in your marrow,
your ancestors' voices are singing in
the tunnels of your bones

this is for you, lover

come and sit beside me, let me tell you about us for a while: in a dream I can stitch together our intimacy, when I pull you close and catch the smells hidden in your hair, sharing this blanket when the sun has set, pulling your hips in and carrying you to my bed, eyes closed, exploring only touch and taste, I crave your sweet saliva, hold your head back and run my tongue down your neck, find a spot that makes you call me baby, we twist and reshape our bodies, finding all the ways to fit inside of each other, what feels like abstract sin, fingers in my mouth, a pool of sweat in the middle, rough, soft, heavy, hum, in the end what we have is only our breathing, locked fingers, braided legs, and the inability to let it all go, and even in this beautiful making, though it may not last, in this moment it reminds me that I am alive with you, that when your ear lies on my chest, my stupid little heart recites the sweetest words from my core, to tell you with silence just how deeply you make me feel.

existential dread doubles down

oh sweet baby,
turn your gaze to the distance,
rolling cumulonimbus devour the skies,
the sound of the end of the world:
shattering, roaring, quietly coming our way

oh sweet baby,
let me hold your face in my hands and wish
for you the present, I could sing you sweet
songs, bring you flowers, make you food, and
swing my hips until you're dancing next to me

oh sweet baby,
here it is again, that feeling, you know
which one I mean, I want to do it all with you,
until there's nothing left here and again we
are left with a new world to reconstruct

moon man

cling to me, my little february,
sweet limpet laying on my rock,
snip and harvest this affection,
keep it in your shell, store it unlocked

use it when you need it,
remember that there's always more,
with you I never seem to run out,
I think this is what it's made for

hold my hand, my moon man
as tightly as you hold my mind,
your light radiates the distance to me,
illuminating the obsidian skies

tenderness orbits within us,
a proclamation that I'm not afraid to love,
to depths that parallel the ocean below,
and hidden star clusters up above

Clara

I'll throw roses into the air
every single day,
hoping they reach you

I'll rest my hand on the earth
eyes closed tightly,
sending my heart to yours

I'll hold your memories in,
laughter and anger,
you were so many things

I'll still cry myself to sleep,
do you think of me too
on the other side?

I'll continue with your spirit,
mother to son, I have your hair
son to mother, you have my heart

with gratitude, forever

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