

# Senora Things:

## PART I: WHAT THE ACTUAL HELL?

1. I go slow, see intentional patterns of harm, and dream of ways to make new grooves.



### Now

The earth is an orange.  
Peeled and split open  
into people size pieces  
I eat in my sleep, smile  
at my dreambelly  
full of people pulp.

The earth is a machine.  
I take apart  
and hold up to the light  
Lick its pieces—  
my saliva a salve

The earth is a piece of paper.  
I fold forward and back  
and slant—  
an origami flag  
waves of Walmart receipts.

*Now, now*

I bought your shit  
and I'm poisoned.  
I traded time  
and I'm in debt.  
I touched all the concrete and metal  
and I'm burned.

*Now, now ,now,*

Now, it's time to make the medicine.

## Part II: THE MEDICINE

### 2. I take walks and talk to my neighbors.

#### It's Magic hour in Pleasant Grove....

...and the sky is purple instead of orange  
tiny lawns have been swept clean  
fireflies dot the dusky skirt  
of the tree canopy  
flags that stood at attention all day  
Rest against their posts  
Tejano's whistle their greetings to their children playing in the yard as they  
arrive home  
my neighbor's card party  
sounds like a fight to strangers  
but I know to be an elder schooling a niece or nephew at spades  
a caballero walks his horse through the park  
Mario stares at the engine of his work truck,  
wondering what it is this time  
Ms. Betty waters her yard by hand  
And Ms. Claudia gives Lupe some chicken left over from the food bank  
which Lupe will turn into Caldo and give half right back to Ms. Claudia.  
You can hear Angel's saw winding down and Willie Johnson is turning off  
his hot rods to go in to make some supper.

It's bulk trash week and I find treasures I tell myself I'll come back for in my  
car

70s lawn chairs that just need a fresh coat of paint  
a plant clipping I can just stick in the ground and it will grow  
bedposts I can maybe use for lady legs in an art project

All this treasure is no surprise to me.

I round the corner at Mack and Quinto and there is the Virgin surrounded by Christmas lights  
A shiny reminder of our strength and fragility  
And as the sun dips behind the Trinity forest it doesn't seem dark,  
I don't feel afraid  
and I'm definitely not alone.

### **3. I make sure I notice divine intervention**

#### **Unbroken Semaphore:**

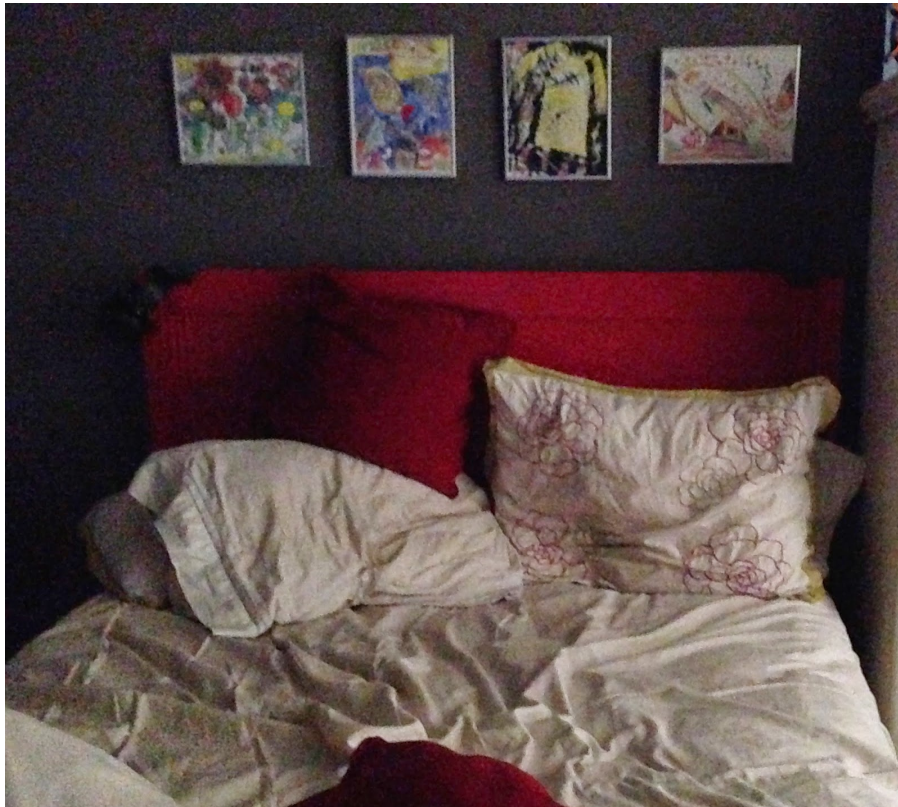
Two Fridays before my son moved into his dorm, and a year before the daughter would follow, I found myself alone in the car on the way to a doctor's appointment and decided to allow myself an all-out ballfest. Apparently, the daily shower cries and occasional craughing (cry-laughing) moments had not been enough, because a torrential downpour from the ole' eye sockets and a somewhat controlled howling from the gut ensued--until I pulled up to the stoplight at Peak and Bryan.

From the left peripheral, I could tell someone was watching me. I casually wiped my face and glanced to the side. A young brown boy smiled and waved from a Jeep Grand Cherokee. I smiled. I waved back. I was having a hard time stopping the flow of tears, though. I let the Jeep go ahead. I made it through a few more lights with a lot of inner cheerleading and less howling, but still quite a bit of tear flow.

The next time we stopped, the young man, in his Four Square t-shirt, off to do good deeds early on a Friday morning at the end of summer, turned around, made a heart with his hands over his own heart and threw it to me, music video style. I craughed and gave him two thumbs up as he drove away. I was kind of overwhelmed for a minute and then I said out loud,

"Fine, God. I get it. I'm not alone." And I finally stopped crying, just as I pulled into the parking lot for my appointment.

4. I enjoy myself without shame and with healthy abandon. Also, I acknowledge my rhythms. I am a morning girl when it comes to making love.



### **Morning light**

is kind to lovers,  
casting shadows,  
filtering gently  
through sheets.  
A warm witness to  
ancient rhythm

powers poured out  
exhausted and full  
devoured and whole.

5. I water the lawn by hand in my housecoat/smock and bare feet and contemplate today's news and search my heart to see how I am part of the problem. My feet need to touch the dirt.

### **Heard (He Can't Hear You)/Slow Moan**

Tonight I water the lawn in my bare feet and a smock like my grandmothers-  
(White/Brown  
Eight/Twelve kids  
Bread gravy/tortilla beans)  
Pockets for a Coronita and a shaker of salt.  
I pray for my sons and yours--  
the ones with the bad tempers and the ones who are slow to speak.  
Some ground is lush and cool under my heels,  
in others,  
the crunchy grass stabs my toes.  
That sun, always picking and choosing  
that rain playing church games--  
floods swell, fires burn,  
but  
I'm not returning to the earth tonight.  
Water wand in hand, warm fire inside, I wonder am I part of the danger?  
Hoping I'd rather suffer the mistake than cause the harm?  
This ache stretches into a slow moan.  
The dirt and I, we recognize,  
and cry ancient,

ears tuned to the blood of the  
unheard.

**6. My mom presents herself to me after her physical passing. I  
reject the evangelical ideas that this is voodoo:**



### **Momma River**

lons bubble up,  
water stirs,  
foam forms

Your trouble, my gain

Your trouble, our pain

You flow and I am trained to smooth out rough edges

knock off terrain, turn it into sediment beneath the layers of your current  
hiding pockets of sunlight  
silent rays of warmth  
I feel when I lay my body flat  
and let you hold me,  
wash me,  
rock me  
like a baby  
like your baby.

## **Momma Tree**

Here, I am supposed to talk about roots  
and firm foundations  
sturdy branches for cradling  
colorful leaves for showing off the splendor of your beauty  
when in season

But that's not how Mama was tree to me

Here,  
her shadowy roots dangle and cling to the ground,  
her branches mix with cloud cover for shade  
her leaves bring me the sound of ocean waves she's never seen

Here, she spits oxygen into my mouth when I forget to breathe

That's how Mama is tree to me



7. I go back for my cousin-our sister moms are trees and rivers now, I'm their hands and feet. *On the morning my cousin had a Covid-related stroke.*



## Bound

If it were just you and me on a Saturday afternoon  
we'd watch MTV, sweat it out on the wagon wheel couch  
with our legs propped up near the water cooler  
fan blowing so hard,  
the mosquitoes can't even buzz our way,  
There's a coke or a glass of iced tea on the coffee table we drink so fast,  
it's pointless to sit down.  
The sweat on our legs stand at attention

On this day I cried out to our ancestors,  
Yours mine and whoever's would listen  
I found a way back to a faith that pre-existed man.  
Primal, instinctual, fearless,  
Face on the dashboard

surrounded by blue afternoon,  
a strange, early cold.  
a wail of prayer  
a siren of seeking  
supernatural tradition  
ritual affirmation  
contemplative pleading  
We will all be healed, yes  
We will all find our way to the healer, yes  
We are tuned to the divine, yes, yes, yes.

## 8. I struggle with the self care journey:



### Seasoning the Skillet

I had hoped to get a head start on things last night  
Instead, I fell asleep while it was still daylight  
woke up after midnight, sleepwalking around inside my own heart  
knocking on walls, testing for sturdiness  
plucking my vena cava in its hardened state

massaging my atriums to the rhythm of the wobbly ceiling fan  
Papum, papum, papum-mystical invocation, invisible CPR.  
my hands clasped like an anxious ghost waiting for test results to  
appear out of the ether.

Earlier, I burned the pinche brown rice I was trying to make taste good  
and then I burned the skillet trying to clean it—plain and simple, I was  
putting things back in their places and I forgot about the fire on the  
stove. Now, I heat and wipe it with oil,

heat oil heat oil heat oil heat oil

I wonder if I am dying. I think the timing of meeting my deductible is  
cruel and as my momma used to say, par for the course even though  
she never played golf. I wonder if she is stuck in my throat and I can  
just let it be, or if I have enough magic in me to shrink things that don't  
belong in my body

I planned to do so many things but now I am a mist hard to hold  
all google searches, podcasts, litanies of news reports.

Virus maps and check marks have been given the middle finger

Life is profane and holy  
profound and simple  
beautiful and stupid  
and worthy of every damn second.

Yep, I checked. I am still alive.

Part III: THE HEALING ...



**9. I seek wisdom from ancestors and they show me grace even though they say I am nosy. Collective remembering and recording.**

### **Lovedale**

Ama, I still see the trees  
through your back door.  
Waking up on the porch  
the bean bag, my temporary bed  
A quick turn of my head  
and there you are leaning against the kitchen sink  
in your housecoat  
staring into the back yard like me  
but there is a warning behind your eyes,  
when you catch my eyes, catching yours,  
as if to say

don't end up like me, don't end up like me, don't end up like me.

You stick your tongue out at me, click on the fire, and crack an egg.  
Pop steps into the frame of the back door,  
all business in his creased slacks and cowboy boots,  
one foot on the stoop,  
surveying the land we will  
have to give up one day to the Hunts.  
And later on, after bean tacos  
I'll sleep again on the side of your bed with one eye on  
Godzilla or King Kong on your postage stamp-sized black and white TV  
and Pop will laugh when I jump,  
a singsong laugh, like an old dog barking  
as if to say

remember me, remember me, remember me.

