

MAYRA PORRATA

# WINTER MEDICINE



new & selected  
poems

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Mayra Porrata

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The most difficult seasons  
teach us most about life.



WINTER MEDICINE.6  
WINTER OF MY MIND.7  
YOU WILL KNOW.8  
ENTANGLED.9  
ONE.10  
GOOD GRIEF.11  
HOSPICING.12  
WHEN YOU SILENCE A WOMAN.13  
HARDSHIP.14  
ENGAGEMENT.15  
BECOMING.16  
WRITER.16  
VISIBLE.17  
FORGIVING.18  
SOUL CONTRACT.19  
DIASPORA.20  
I WAS WRONG TOO.21  
UNTIL IT HAPPENS TO YOU.22  
ORDINARY.23  
BELONGING.24

## WINTER MEDICINE



Part of me died when I was 19 -  
when my tender dreams were crushed  
on that bitter Ohio night.

The night I drove away from a house  
that was not a home, and wandered around town,  
crying and grieving.

It was the same night I first held myself  
in my raw human despair and disbelief and  
begged God to please show me a way through.

Stepping out of my car, sobbing and frozen I  
lifted the heavy lid that cut me on its way down.  
Without fanfare or hesitation, I flung my portfolio,  
my supplies, my art as if they were trash.

Creating instead a lifetime of sadness and self-  
betrayal, stroke by stroke and word for word,  
who's to say that brutal winter night  
didn't help cure my pain?



## WINTER OF MY MIND

There are many winters  
in a lifetime...  
times of great stillness,  
of darkness and pain  
that take over  
like a fierce front  
from parts known and unknown  
to linger and force  
sheer adaptation.

To breathe takes effort.  
To move hurts the ligaments of life.  
Yet without motion there is only stagnation.

Suspended and frozen  
in this inhospitable winter of mind  
my dormant heart awaits  
for the comfort of my spring.



## YOU WILL KNOW

Where do Ohio birds go  
during each fall's turning  
when the leaves show  
their true colors  
right before they fall?

A powerful season  
is also upon us,  
when we will show  
the brilliant hues of  
our divinity- our souls.

What will you do  
and where will you go  
when the vibrant shades of our  
humanity emerge—  
like a forest that never forgot what it was?  
Trust yourself, you will know.



## ENTANGLED

We forget—that we belong to one another  
through the inseparable web of life  
contracting and imploding  
expanding and evolving  
meeting the dissonance and friction  
in an infinite dance, attuned--  
to the pulse of creation  
that always remembers  
our truest rhythm  
and tune.



## ONE

Like a wave that doesn't remember  
it's part of the ocean  
you too will crash and dissolve--

When that time comes  
when you're either tricked or coaxed  
into your own glorious rebirth,  
and cease your fearful chatter  
I'll be on that shore with you.



## GOOD GRIEF

Escorting the humble  
through valleys and summits,  
exhausting and burning  
the fumes of your mind,  
reducing the need for regular senses  
it is you, grief has come to find...

The kind that distills  
the willing to kindness-  
the kind that disorients  
and opens the heart-  
the kind that transforms  
the newly forsaken,  
the kind that turns pain  
into art.



## HOSPICING

The caregivers know--  
they know the restless hours  
between the tending and the feeding,  
the sterilizing and forgiving  
all that must be endured  
without resistance  
before the sunrise of each day.

Hospicing is deep and steep labor-  
we shed quiet tears  
and soothe away fears,  
while the masters of modernity  
look away while we weep.



## WHEN YOU SILENCE A WOMAN

When you silence a woman  
with your labels and names,  
and patriarchal judgments  
and patriotic claims...

...about who she is--  
about her own pain  
about her experience  
and who she should blame...  
about her life choices  
and her worldview  
about her philosophy  
and what she holds true...

I hope you will hear  
the deafening sound  
of the heartbreak that opened  
the voice you just drowned.



## HARDSHIP

Whenever you notice,  
in your own life,  
or in the challenged life of another...  
an unfairness, an unkind fate,  
an unfathomable injustice,  
an illness, a death,  
walk up to it and  
breathe it in as if it were  
the freshest air in this world.  
Then, repeat until your lungs are saturated  
with the uncommon knowledge  
underneath it all;

and then you will know  
the rhyme and reason  
for every human hardship  
and then you will know  
that the only cure for suffering  
is love.



## ENGAGEMENT

Remember the lessons,  
so you don't use them, too.  
Monetized. Standardized. Scrutinized.  
That's the price we pay  
for believing the want ads  
that others design for you.

Sweet purveyor of goodness  
How are you different from them?  
Pay attention to what you're thinking  
and what you're trying to sell.  
Forget about engagement,  
forget about the clicks.  
Forget about convincing  
stop using all the tricks.

There are new expansive projects  
and adventures in store,  
the most essential things  
must now come into accord  
engage with your heart,  
and do nothing more.



## BECOMING

Tiny glimpses  
we each gleam  
in graceful moments  
and in dreams...

veils that fall  
reduce our plight  
inviting, beckoning  
our soul's light.

## WRITER

String your words together  
like precious beads of light  
that reflect the highest wisdom  
from the corners of your life;

words of love, and joy, and truth -  
words that heal the broken-hearted,  
write the words that soothe.



## VISIBLE

What you see in the world  
can only change  
through the kaleidoscope  
of your inner seeing  
birthed from the marrow  
of your imagination  
so that maybe  
you'll finally see it  
in visible light.



## FORGIVING

Until you understand forgiveness  
you'll remain ensnared and seething--  
deceiving yourself into believing  
in the sunless sky of grieving  
and demanding reparation  
for emotions triggered and inflamed--

when what's truly called for  
is yielding and releasing  
of that which coaxed your shadow  
into sweet communion  
with what is yours to claim.



## SOUL CONTRACT

Who are you to think you know  
of the sacred agreement  
that God and each soul make  
before their first breath,  
to become flesh and blood?

We cannot know--  
we can only guess and speculate  
with compassionate curiosity  
the deeper reasons of another's life.

Better to accept what you cannot tolerate.  
Better to accept that you cannot know.  
Better to love our brother or sister in their bliss or  
misery,  
than to think you have any clue  
about their journey or their path.

Better to look within  
and read the fine print.  
Better to review  
the contract you created  
when you entered this world  
with your own sacred pact.



## DIASPORA

Dispersed we have been  
for decades, perhaps lifetimes  
searching for everything  
we thought we lost.

Seeking sense and meaning making,  
longing for birthplaces  
and peaceful spaces of belonging  
and love...

Broken-open our wounds we nurse  
through all the heartbreaks that remind us;  
what is whole cannot be dispersed.



## I WAS WRONG TOO

For the merging of our journeys  
and the confusion that got us here.  
For delusions dissolved by presence,  
and awareness blessed by tears.

For pain mutually inflicted,  
for my wounds hurting you--  
it's obvious, but bears stating,  
that I was wrong too.

For forcing my adaptation,  
for forcing me to fight....  
for my dormant spirit awakened  
grateful freedom, open flight....

For the fire you lit around me,  
which you thought you would control,  
was my wake-up call to rising  
like a phoenix, fully whole.

## UNTIL IT HAPPENS TO YOU



Until your heart is broken-open,  
and your tears begin to flow.  
Until truth challenges knowledge  
and opinions you outgrow.

Until your body is harshly shaken,  
and awakened from the dream.  
Until your wounds meet open daylight  
and you fall to your knees and scream.

Until disillusionment is no longer a stranger  
and your sorrow becomes known.  
Until defeats are humbly treasured  
and you see the world's suffering as your own.

Until the water you drink becomes sacred,  
and the sound of your breath, your guide.  
Until you allow life to live you,  
because you take everything in stride.

Until sitting in silence is cherished  
and you're fed by Mother Earth.  
Until you see coherence in everything  
and with each death, a birth--  
you have not truly lived.



## ORDINARY

I wanted to be ordinary;  
to immerse myself into Midwest life--  
of production, and seasons,  
and calculated reasons—  
to prove that I mattered, somehow.

Weaving in treasured memories,  
with the grief and persistence  
during long, harsh winters  
that taught me how to die,  
I became so ordinary,  
I could no longer remember  
the blue hues  
of my Caribbean skies.

Now embracing all the shades of my living  
confirming what many already know:  
there is nothing ordinary  
about any of us.



## BELONGING

Belonging is not for winning or gaining,  
nor for faking or squeezing yourself  
into straightjackets with rusted zippers  
instead of making beautiful dresses  
and writing landscapes from your heart.

Belonging is the simplest thing to do  
when you're not swooned nor swayed  
by the confusion of friendly strangers  
looking for direction out of their painful creations-  
conditioned to believe what's untrue.

Belonging is the relentless un-becoming  
of everything that isn't you.

## Other works by Mayra

Minding the Caregiver  
Silent Retreat- a journal for caregivers  
Honoring your grief  
Have you ever been here?  
60 ways to know love (English & Spanish)  
Silence is Alive (poetry collection)  
Until it happens to you (poetry collection)  
All my mistakes  
52 weeks  
Gratitude Yearbooks  
(2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023)  
My true feelings  
The Workbook of Human Superpowers  
GRATEFUL | 30-day self-care journal  
People are like flowers  
Emotional Intelligence: making sense of your  
emotional data  
A Nighttime Trip to Planet NUF  
Soul Friends  
Wake Up Beautiful Girl  
Lilly's Life





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