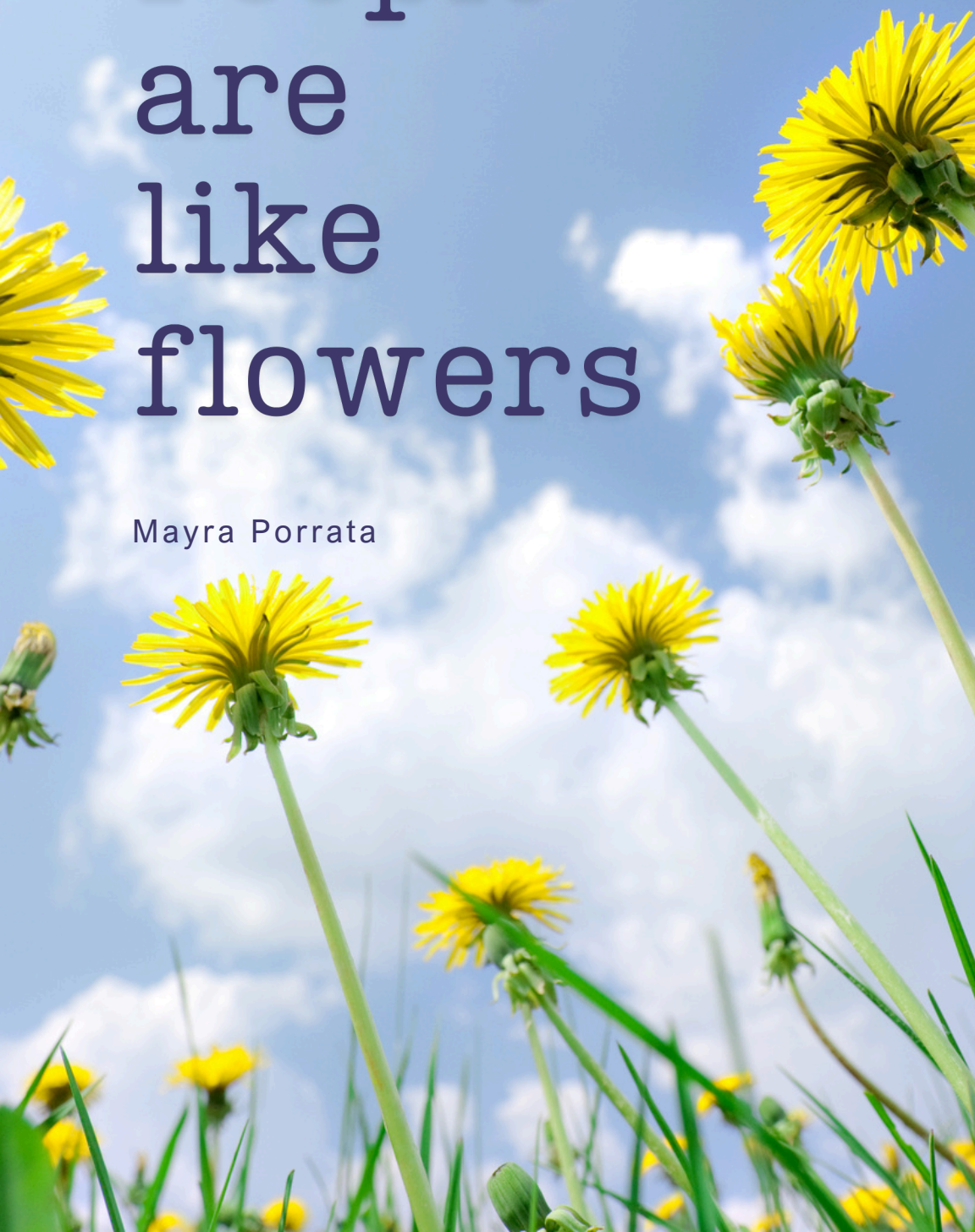


People are like flowers

Mayra Porrata



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It's not what you look at that matters
-- it's what you see.

Henry David Thoreau



For my daughters

For my 6th grade classmates
at Holy Family Grade School

For my 6th grade classmates
at Colegio Santa Rita

For my precious birthplace,
Puerto Rico

In the spring of 1977, following a life-altering relocation and an even more traumatic winter, I saw my first Ohio flowers. Mesmerized by their color, I approached the grassy area where the bright sunny flowers appeared.

Standing there, I felt like nature was reminding me that everything was going to be okay-- that I had indeed survived the winter-- that even flowers grow after such a brutal and inhospitable season.

After a few minutes, I was interrupted by a classmate. She asked: "what are you looking at?" Without taking my eyes off the precious golden buds, and in my clunky English I replied: "I'm looking at the pretty yellow flowers."-- She laughed and quickly corrected me: "those aren't flowers, those are weeds!"



Not being an Ohio native, there was much I needed to learn-- the English language the least of my concerns. But, not knowing what the word weed meant, I looked it up in my Spanish-English dictionary--it said something about soft green tissue and lacking a permanent trunk -- una hierba. Ok.

This place of seasons was so different than the tropical one I knew by heart-- whose rhythms were my own --where the colors of my ocean, and the smell of the sun on my skin infused my days with such joy and connection. These little yellow flowers actually gave me hope.



Thankfully, I was surrounded by many kind-hearted friends. Thanks to them, I learned new words and translated old ones in ways that enriched my understanding of life.

Eventually, I did learn. Eventually I understood not everyone sees the same way. Eventually I understood that being kind and seeing beauty in a field of weeds, or in anything, is a choice.

But also this: that even the weeds-- those trunkless, undesirable, fleshy greens have beauty and their own inherent wisdom-- and they were teaching me a sacred lesson that would take nearly 4 decades to fully understand and embrace.



On an early spring day I walked off to explore
a field of tiny flowers I had never seen before.

How did these tender buds emerge through the
frozen Ohio soil? How did I even survive so far
from my shore?

I was struck by their presence-- they felt like an
old friend – I wanted to get closer, so off towards
them I went.

Through a season of change, nearly frozen and
spellbound, here I was walking towards tiny suns
on the ground.

It suddenly struck me, that I too had survived
and just like these sunny buds, I was very much
alive.



And so began this lifelong obsession
of noticing cycles of growth and depression;
and seeing the wholeness in everything
became a profession!

Encountering countless examples of grace
under pressure, I knew I was not alone-- and
that each human (and flower) is a unique and
divine treasure.



Some need sunlight, some are aquatic,
some are plain and simple, and some wildly
exotic!

Some are safely potted and thrive best alone;
some prefer large gardens, to being on their own.

Some move with the wind and really like to jive,
some are sassy and scratchy and will eat you up
alive!

And, while some simply wilt and die way too
soon, some seem to linger eternally in bloom.



Yet some have argued we're more like weeds--
resilient and strong, fulfilling our needs.

Flowers are praised for their beauty and
perfection--weeds get disdain, not our
affection.

Though many will scorn the path of a weed
it's still a divine journey many souls lead...
...and that tiny dandelion I saw long ago
taught me just about everything I needed
to know.



The dandelion taught me how to really see,
the duality of things that would come to be.

The dandelion's spirit led me to persevere,
to rise from the darkness despite all my fears—
through fierce struggles and cosmic grace,
my truest nature I faithfully embraced.

And now here I stand, much like I did before
contemplating the magic of a flower I adore.



Other works by Mayra Porrata

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Have you ever been here?

Unmasking

60 ways to know love (journal)

Until it happens to you (poetry)

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Gratitude Yearbooks
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