

# JUST SAYING

A COLLECTION OF POEMS

LIANA MIR

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is probably the most personal collection of poetry I'll ever let wander out into the world. Treat it gently. You might hold someone's<sup>1</sup> heart in your hands.

I have this friend, who's been there and prayed for me when I needed it and sometimes heard the stories behind these poems.<sup>2</sup> Most of them don't have stories though. Or they do, but I don't share them. These are the all the ones I didn't share.

---

<sup>1</sup> Just not mine. Of course, some nebulous someone out there's. (Just don't quote me on that, all right?)

<sup>2</sup> I have always been grateful that I *could* tell you anything, and you were always willing to pray for me.

They're there though, this shadowbox defining by what they leave empty and sometimes spilling out into poetry. The truth is, I tried for years as a child to journal. I never could. Then one day I looked back and read my poems, *these* poems, and realized that this is the way I write down my passage through this life.

It's easier, some might say, to look at things indirectly.<sup>3</sup> But that's not really why I did it. I wrote things down in poems because it was cathartic, because that's the way to not only look at the darkness but also at the light shining on the other side of it. Because in a poem, there's a world of healing, not just the hurt needing salve and forgiveness. Because I can be honest in poetry in a way that prose can't carry and say the things I otherwise never would.

So here you go. Pass gently into the woods, my friend. Don't startle the deer.

---

<sup>3</sup> But what do they know? Poetry is lancing the wound, facing the dragon, beating it down head on with your own bloody fists because by the grace of God, you're not going down without a fight, if you have to drag yourself up a cliff face by the tips of your broken nails.

JUST SAYING



Winter's winds like light  
cut through morning skies and wake  
my breath, gasp, alive

## JUST SAYIN'

Tiny house, bird mouths open  
over the front porch step  
Mother dove comes to visit  
when I am away  
Just sayin'

Three square windows  
each one small  
Tangled green over lattice  
troublesome vines  
Just sayin'

Something broke glass, shattered  
it in the last frost  
Something broke brass, the  
handle turns easy  
Just sayin'

My heart is glass, mouth open  
over the front porch step  
My soul is brass come to visit  
the door is open  
Just sayin'

Brother, sister linger out  
while I linger in  
Someone broke the ice  
over the bird bath  
Just sayin'

F L A Y

Forty lashes  
—legally dead.  
Lashed me with unbridled tongue.  
Sticks and stones  
of words are bled.  
The wounds are old; the blood is young.

## PORTRAIT OF THE SCRIBBLER

I am one of those people—  
    (they say you'd have to know me  
        to love me; do not try too hard)  
the kind you wish you'd meet;  
the kind you wish you'd never meet:  
    the kind who makes unnecessary  
        grand announcements: let  
        it be hereknown, I feel this way  
        (you couldn't care? why don't you  
            say!);  
who transforms life to drama, singing  
    eclectic lines from favorite songs  
    (do not worry; this won't take long);

who softly, yet sarcastically  
    pedals backward, lunges forward  
    (uncertainty is so untoward);  
who offers love—platonically—  
    too readily, or so I'm told  
    (living life is for the bold);  
who will listen carefully  
    until the flash of inspiration  
    interrupting conversation  
    (writing is my meditation);  
who's organized and yet chaotic,  
    whose stacks of papers overflow  
    (at least I have them, neat or no);  
who's like to answer every question,  
    even the rhetorical  
    (I'm just a tad too literal)—  
the kind who always has your back  
    but forgets to cut you slack;  
the kind who wishes harder than  
    she works, but yet still works;  
the kind who hopes and then despairs  
    then hopes again, and then despairs;  
the kind who of herself thinks nothing  
    then turns around and puts on airs;

the kind who tells you right and wrong  
by every school of grammar and thought,  
then sheepishly admits she's wrong  
and humbly admires your better thought;  
the kind who writes and too well thinks  
of her own words, of her own words;  
who knows that there are better things,  
but always comes right back to words.

## SACRAMENT

I have fought the dragon  
I have kissed the bride  
Swallowed from the flagon  
Its fire wine inside  
Fairytale have burned me  
While they brought me light  
Mythic heaven spurned me  
Flaunting its delight  
If I have wandered boldly  
From the throne of grace  
Reprimand me coldly  
Turn away your face  
If I have been the dragon  
Cut me down in place

## MOTE AND BEAMING

You are the blind woman hiding between my ears  
And the deaf woman hiding within my mouth  
And the mute woman hiding behind my eyes  
You, in my mirrored mind, who claim the mote  
Is in another woman's eye and the whine  
Is in another woman's ear and the beam  
Could not possibly be the lump you cannot  
    swallow  
Down your throat

## POETRY IS SPILLING BLOOD

Writing poetry is spilling blood  
Lancing the heavens within our veins  
Peeling back the icy skin  
We wrap like armor around our hearts

I forgot to breathe  
To live  
To dance  
But then again  
No one taught me how

Writing poetry is breathing blood  
Choking through heartache from our own  
          mouths  
Refusing to breathe back in  
Until our hearts are cleaned, our skin is pure

I lost myself—once  
My hope  
My dreams  
But there they are  
Beneath the loss of pain

## C O N T A G I O U S

Someone forgot to tell me that poetry is contagious

It gets in your blood, it infects you

Sneeze, and you'll pass it on to another

and another and another

So, sneeze, it'll do them good

where—

kisses only patch the wounds until

they heal with no help from the kisser

and breathing only makes us feel knife-sharp

the slickness of all the things we've ever felt

in pain and harder breathing, love's own

agony

there—

lines from in your heart flay open the wounded

flesh

and I can breathe again through the knife-  
sharp pain  
for I have felt myself within these lines  
So sneeze, and I'm infected and see  
myself where others see  
someone else and something else fraught  
within their memory  
and kiss me so it stops the bleeding  
breathe until I feel the ache burbling up again  
inside  
then sneeze and give me poetry to lance this  
wound  
and let out all the words inside that cannot  
breathe  
where I have hidden them

## CONVERSATIONS . 01

## 1. Conversations

Those moments when you open your mouths and talk  
(or not), when you open your souls and pour them out  
through your open gazes—still not quite unguarded

but more

than in any other moment (or not), when you spill  
your hearts

across your sleeves and whisper with just a simple  
touch--

Can you hear me? Do you hear me? Do you need me?

Do you want me?

--presuming the answer, no, but promising yourself  
you won't.

Can you hear me? Do you hear me? Do you want me?

You open your mouth for a conversation, then shut it  
again unspent.

## WERE I TO HIDE BETWEEN

Were I to hide myself between these lines,  
Could you untuck me from my hiding place,  
Unfold the parchment letter of His grace,  
Find balance 'tween mercy and the fines  
Upon my conscience where my guilt is clear:  
For I have failed to love my brother as  
My soul with all the love that my soul has  
Without the taint of anger or of fear?  
How could you look at me who has not loved  
Perfectly and overlook my sin?  
For you have seen my honesty ungloved,  
And you've been wounded but come back again.  
Unearned by me is this releasing of  
My debt to you: may you be blessed by heav'n.

4 A . M .

4 a.m.

My coworkers look at me like I'm a little crazy.

You get up when?

I drink my tea.

I wander around when everything  
in the dark shines a little brighter  
under the lamplight, my day is wiser  
spent on earlier hours:

when I can do all within my power  
to be ready before they rise,  
others into the light.

I sip my cup of tea,  
read my morning meditations,  
gather the things I need,  
and this is contentment to me.

At 4 a.m.

## T O F A L L

I wake up each morning,  
hoping to fall in love.  
I imagine it must hurt  
when you reach the bottom,  
But from what spectacular heights  
we must fall to fall  
and down the descent,  
the heat riding up my back  
in a brace for the impact—  
It is better to have fallen  
than to never know flight.

## THE PERFECT WOMAN

If I cannot conform, then I  
Inferior am to every woman;  
If I only conform, then I  
Inferior am to every man.

This will not do! I never am  
Every woman, every man.  
Condemned to fail, success is pale,  
If dare I be whatever I am.

A woman is strong—she is too much  
Like man; more feminine she should be.  
A woman is gentle and so is weak.  
More feminine strength she should seek.

This will not do! For what I am  
Is woman, not a female man.  
Feminist not and feminine not  
The perfect woman, but I am.

## FLIGHT OF A WILD MARE

If living is poetry, then am I dead?  
I'm down in the trenches where iron is red.  
I'm running like stallions through mountains have  
fled.

You're riding me hard, and I'm put away wet.

You're riding me hard, and I'm put away wet.  
My soul like His cloak is a gamble, a bet.  
My heart, it defies me; I'm shackled in debt.  
How do I flick off the fly of the world?

How do I flick off the fly of the world  
When desires within me are good and bad  
swirled?  
Within me a wild mare's mane comes unfurled.  
I'm running like stallions through mountains have  
fled.

I'm running like stallions through mountains have  
fled.

I'm down in the trenches where iron is red.

If living is poetry, then am I dead?

My living is blood and sinew and sweat.

## THE INWARD CUP

I'm hungry and the fire's cold  
The flames have stricken bright and bold  
The way we feed is growing old  
The outward cup; the inward's sold

The grain is parched and I still hunger  
The water's wet and I still thirst  
The mind perceives and feels no wonder  
The heart receives and does not burst

I pray the heavens! open 'sunder  
Let our eyes perceive and wonder  
Imaginations lightning, thunder!  
The inward heart may now unfold

## ASSAULT OF DREAMS

Dreams are shattered glass of thought  
By the heart and mind are bought  
Mirages of all we sought  
Through our day and battles fought  
All we learned and all we taught  
Stray imaginations caught  
Snatched to weave into our dreams  
Played back in streams and onslaught

## DANCING ON THE LINE

Life is dancing on my nerve endings  
Can you see the neon lights?  
Can you hear the sounds of strife?  
I've been singing in the background  
Of the music of my silence  
In the darkness of my room  
Where the quietness goes boom  
And the canvas of my mind  
Can explode with brand new sight  
    Can you feel the beat  
    Of the dance of life?

## THE WORLD REPAYS

Life is hard. So?  
Get one thing straight kid:  
the world owes you nothing.  
Nothing.

You owe this world something to start with,  
some currency to get you going:  
laugh to become enjoyable and  
love to become lovable;  
serve to find help in need;  
hate and become the object of your hatred—  
Like produces like.  
With the same measure,  
the world repays.

You owe yourself to pay the world,  
to live for something more.

Control yourself—

your heart and whether you salve your wounds  
or lash out with their blood;  
your soul and whether you sell it  
or give it away,  
or lose it: stolen, fleeting treasure exchanged;  
your mind and whether you build the world  
or let yourself be built upon;  
your character and who you decide to be.

Do and it shall be done.

Whatever your eye is single upon,  
your flesh becomes.

You owe yourself to master yourself.

You're the only thing that's yours.

## RECURSION

We look at a tree and we are not dying  
Except souls die every day  
We burn and are born anew  
We are the phoenix  
We burn and we never stop burning

We whisper I love you and are not lying  
Except resting 'side you, we say  
We turn and are born in you  
The words are a matrix  
We turn and we never stop turning

## WE WERE WANDERERS

Remember the city of angels where I was born?  
I remember the cities of dreams where children  
played:

A child I was at the window, knowing I was three  
and remembering the walk to the store,  
stepped out not knowing it was dangerous.

Remember the town at the top of the mountain  
where rush hour did not exist? I always asked  
and you always answered, It's tourist season.  
I remember the children in the yard:  
One of them, me, hopping lightly on my toes,  
trying to avoid where the elk had walked.

Remember the house shaded in Russian olives?  
We only stayed three months, remember,  
and I was the only child who was not surprised  
when you walked away and mother stayed  
and my brother preferred to sleep in your  
apartment,  
town house, home; but I preferred neither and  
both.  
Remember that we were wanderers?

I have never found a restless couch but, restive,  
turned to the horizon when clocks chimed hours,  
ticking time the way we counted houses on both  
hands  
then added our toes. I always said,  
Three years is too long to stay in one place.  
It grows on you certainly, uncertainly, this  
certainty:  
We were wanderers. Remember the mountains,  
the plains, the rains, and the endless drifts of  
snow.

## H O M E

This is my home  
Where the mountains ring  
Under cloudswept skies  
And the heavens sing

This is my home  
Where the forests green  
Carpet the hills  
Under snow pristine

This is my home  
Where the rivers run  
By the mountain roads  
That are full of sun

This is my home  
Where the rocks are tall  
And the flowers wild  
And the spring birds call

This is my Colorado

BILLOWS OVER BLACK  
FOREST

Yesterday was ninety-two degrees  
And even I huddled over a whirring fan  
Today we were promised heat  
More of it, and higher winds

Clouds billow behind my house  
They are not clouds but smoke  
Tears spill instead of rain  
I know those streets  
I rode those roads  
My aunt cannot come home today  
Except by another way

## EMPTY SPACES

I have missed you  
In empty spaces

Tick, tick  
My heart beats

Tock, tock  
You're gone  
The wind blows through

CONVERSATIONS . 03

3. Because I talk to God a lot  
even though I stumble a bit  
I scrape my knees  
I bang my limbs  
I prostrate on my nose 'fore Him  
I cried my tears and every night  
I weep where I have not shone light  
I know He hears my needless plight  
My failures fall on shoulders mine

## IT DID NOT PASS

Here is the blood of sacrament,  
the castles we build of bone and  
covenant; oaths we stretched bow taut,  
released, and followed with arrow  
gazes into the bloodswept heart  
of friend, of foe: we drink the cup.

## THE SOUNDLESS SCREAM

The soundless scream  
As sun smote the night  
This is good, they said  
I screamed, but did not  
Let go the light

BETWEEN THE LEAVES

Words are not my shield  
They are my pain,  
My blood  
Seeping between the leaves  
Of virtual paper

I speak without the eloquence  
That thought presumes,  
Twisting and falling over things  
I've never said before  
Years from now,  
I'll have the words to shield me  
Tonight, I only weep

## TALK TO ME

Talk to me, talk to me, tell me something new  
The story of old mysteries, yes, tell me something  
true

Speak to me, speak to me, and tell me what you  
do

When everything you've ever been is finally falling  
through

## EVENT HORIZON

A hollow ache settles in my chest  
I swallow the black hole for my own good  
Light cannot get out; I am horizon  
The memory of all the things that would

## D O N ' T   S T A R T L E

Walk gently into the woods  
Don't startle the deer  
Their antlers are green and growing—  
Pointed, sharp  
Be careful under the trees  
Don't startle the birds  
With their talons and black feathers  
And bright eyes

Come with me by the path  
That wends its way  
Through thickets, thorny hedges  
Over the stream  
Be careful over the bridge  
It has been years  
Since boots that walked here once  
Now walk again

DOUBLE - HELIX OF A  
BUTTERFLY MIND

Caterpillar letters unfurl  
Into the matrices of words and into the spiral  
Stairwell of my DNA, the genes lockstepping  
Into the architecture of myself—  
For words make thoughts and hearts break locks  
To unwind the architect's written scrawl  
Within the caterpillar, and on the shelf  
Is a piece of silken heart to wrap around and lock  
These matrices spiraling inward within  
Until their fluttering beats begin to break  
And all that I have swallowed is now unmade  
Remade and breathing, beating, breaking. My  
steps  
Falter and stumbling to a halt, my heart unfurls  
Into the wings my papilio heart becomes

## THE BRINGING OF LIGHT

### 1

This is the name you gave me that night: destroyer of worlds, bringer of light. The sense of the fantastic was strong in you, painting the canvas in headlong flight upon the whiteness of my mind. I sense in you the kindred spirit lighting the dark with endless flames—they, burning, burn the phoenix into shame, stamp the oldness of my wings, my spirit, my flesh and pounded into the dirt of dusk and dredge of memory pressed, alight me anew until newness springs forth from within and devours my bones. Consume me like ash, awake, and arise! This is the name that you gave

me: destroyer (the worlds within me unraveled)  
and bringer (the worlds within me unfurled).

2

This is the number you painted onto my bones:  
slinger of words, endless, infinity. I picked up the  
montage of sunlight dancing across the stars and  
grasped the ouroboros in our hands, for together  
there is nothing we cannot do when embracing  
infinity, the locksteps of time, locked and  
unlocking within us the wholeness of everything.  
Swallow the endless breadth of space and swallow  
the moon, the stars, the gleaming comets riding in  
on the wave of eternity. Swallow the sunset, the  
sunrise, the endless flames of light from every  
candle burned in all of time, from the birth of the  
world, of living, of mind to the fading brilliance  
of nova amidst the stars as it fades in a number  
writ on my bones and I sling to the void the  
words that never die.

3

In the beginning was the word— You heard the words; I whispered them. You drank the cadence into the steps of your dance, and we laughed with the dizziness of space in the headlong rush toward the time of our births. One seed, one thought, one word held us both: let there be! And headlong into the furling finish of time and butterfly wings and the wings of our imaginations curl into our intelligent DNAs and whisper, this is the moment you and I will end; in the moment it all begins.

4

This is the inner heart of all that ever was: in the beginning I found you dancing within me, the secret place at the center of souls and galaxies where I forgot to place myself firmly on the ladder of existence, so drifted in and out of the cage of flesh. Instead, I bound myself with words, unraveling ever into the night of the endless headlong rush of the heavens into the endless

flames of a phoenix born and reborn until you tugged my heel with your hand and held me, clambering up the inward spiral into my heart and whispered, destroyer of worlds, and writ in my bones the slinger of words: like arrows they flew from my fingertips, lips, and I cried unable to see for the brightness, the bringing of light.

## W I T H O U T

1

I am a boat without an oarsman  
If you see my mind wandering  
Chide it and send it home

2

I am a daughter among women  
If you hear my voice foundering  
Leave it be and let it roam

3

I am a fire without a hearth  
If you catch my heart in silence  
Light it and send it home

4

I am a soul without a berth  
If you feel me in the distance  
Stand bright within the gloam

## REFLECTION

The moon in my pocket is new—  
the tails to the heads of the event horizon;  
I wonder if I pull it out and let change beat upon  
it,  
growth weather its silver to coppery patina,  
if maybe I'll reflect some light.

## S I L E N C E S   K E P T

I find my voice in the stream of human voices—  
a word here, a thought there,  
a wound flayed open and bleeding out a soul,  
in the silences kept between the words,  
in ideas I could never raise my voice against—  
and live—  
but could never let my heart condone.

## L I T T E R A E

things made from letters  
this is how I learned to read  
red, yellow, blue  
rain falling on a mouse  
signs that yawned at sidewalks  
grocer, laundromat  
things made of letters  
born on silent tongues

things made of letters  
dead words upon a page  
concatenated ink  
don't call it litterae  
things made from letters  
from letters, made-up words

endless sentences of words  
rolled up in paragraphs  
bound up into books

two boxes, little boxes  
Mary Poppins boxes  
in them boxes, in them boxes  
in all the boxes words  
reams of letters scrawled on boxes  
scrawled in boxes, writ in letters  
streams of letters we named genre  
streams of literary letters  
bound in literary books

things made from letters  
this is how I learned to read  
letters bound in words, made-up words  
become sentence, endless sentences  
become books, bound-up books  
these things are made from letters  
these things are literature

## G R A V I T A T E

I'm gravitating  
Like toward a black hole  
Only you're warmer, sweeter  
I like you, you know  
Instead of sucking in  
All of the light  
You pour it out to me  
And light up my life

P R A Y E R S . 0 1

My love died today  
I want to get it back  
So help me, God;  
Have mercy now  
That I may love your way

P R A Y E R S . 0 2

I am blood and I am bleeding  
Please, Lord, stem the tide  
I don't know even why it hurts  
But I want to be on Your side

I don't know how to change my ways  
Where I don't know what's wrong  
And what I know, I've tried to fix  
Please turn my dirge to song

I need Your wisdom, need Your eyes  
I need to hear Your will  
I feel I am a soundless scream  
But You are peace, I'm still

Peace that passes understanding  
Please take root in me  
Let there be light and ears to hear  
And grant me eyes to see

I am a sigh and I'm not bleeding  
When You hold my heart  
I give You all these shattered pieces  
That I let fall apart

Do not give them back to me  
I ask, Lord; keep them Yours  
Teach my heart to breathe and then  
Fill me with love like Yours

## THE WAKE OF THE EARTH

This too shall pass in the wake of the earth  
through the tide of human events—  
Though the ache that burns from a heart that  
    spurns  
our pain at what it presents!

This too is a bird in the flames of birth  
or, rather, the pangs of death—  
Though who in the deep of a healing sleep  
is dead by taking a breath?

For I breathe in all the aches and pains,  
these sands to stick in my craw—  
As the oyster chokes and the wheel has spokes,  
that pearl is mine by law!

So though this pass in the wake of the earth  
through the tide of human events,  
By grace, I will wring from this very thing  
the gift that Heaven meant.

## THROUGH THE MIRROR

Life is a splintered mirror  
A hair to the right, a shade to the left  
You see a different you

How we shatter the hours  
A broken vow, a promise kept  
Guest of Aesop's satyr

Time peels away in layers  
A lace-thin veil, a shield-thick weft  
Armor heart runs through

How we kindle the fire  
A grudge let go, a hope we kept  
Made by what we shatter

Life is a splintered mirror  
A crack on the right or healed on the left  
Only one way: that's through

## D I C H O T O M Y

Whisper softly

*You speak too loud*

Love me gently

*You are too proud*

Miss me greatly

*You're fine alone*

Hold me tightly

*I'm flesh; you're bone*

## G L A S S

I am not fragile;  
    though you shatter me in a hundred  
    thousand thousand pieces of  
    glittering glass scattering across the glassy  
    floor,

I am not fragile and  
    will melt in the burning furnace into  
    wholeness  
    and, blown in the buffeting winds, take  
    shape anew.

Light grows longer beams  
Stretching out its fingertips  
To warmly touch mine

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I am not fragile;.....	
I am one of those people.....	
I find my voice in the stream of human voices .....	
I have fought the dragon.....	

I have missed you .....  
I wake up each morning, .....  
If I cannot conform, then I .....  
If living is poetry, then am I dead? .....  
I'm gravitating .....  
I'm hungry and the fire's cold.....  
Life is a splintered mirror.....  
Life is dancing on my nerve endings .....  
Life is hard. So?.....  
Light grows longer beams .....  
My love died today .....  
Remember the city of angels where I was born?.....  
Someone forgot to tell me that poetry is  
contagious.....  
Talk to me, talk to me, tell me something new.....  
The moon in my pocket is new.....  
The soundless scream .....  
things made from letters.....  
This is my home .....  
This is the name you gave me that night: .....  
This too shall pass in the wake of the earth .....  
Tiny house, bird mouths open .....  
Walk gently into the woods .....  
We look at a tree and we are not dying.....

Were I to hide myself between these lines, .....  
Whisper softly .....  
Winter's winds like light.....  
Words are not my shield.....  
Writing poetry is spilling blood .....  
Yesterday was ninety-two degrees .....  
You are the blind woman hiding between my ears.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Liana Mir reads, writes, and wrangles the muses from her mundane home in the Colorado Rockies and, occasionally, from the other side of the Barrier.

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