

JUST SAYING

A COLLECTION OF POEMS

LIANA MIR

Copyright © 2016 Liana Mir

First Mass Market Edition

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations, book reviews, and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

ISBN-13: 978-1540490759

ISBN-10: 1540490750

Printed in the United States

www.lianamir.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Author's Note</i>	vii
(haiku).....	3
Just Sayin'	4
Flay.....	6
Portrait of the Scribbler.....	7
Sacrament.....	10
Mote and Beaming.....	11
Poetry is Spilling Blood.....	12
Contagious	14
Conversations. 01	16
Were I to Hide Between.....	17
4 a.m.....	18
To Fall	19
The Perfect Woman	20

Flight of a Wild Mare.....	22
The Inward Cup.....	24
Assault of Dreams.....	25
Dancing on the Line.....	26
The World Repays.....	27
Recursion.....	29
We Were Wanderers.....	30
Home.....	32
Billows over Black Forest.....	34
Empty Spaces.....	35
Conversations. 03.....	36
It Did Not Pass.....	37
The Soundless Scream.....	38
between the leaves.....	39
Talk to Me.....	40
Event Horizon.....	41
Don't Startle.....	42
Double-Helix of a Butterfly Mind.....	43
The Bringing of Light.....	44
Without.....	48
Reflection.....	50
Silences Kept.....	51
Litterae.....	52
Gravitate.....	54

Prayers. 01.....	55
Prayers. 02.....	56
The Wake of the Earth.....	58
Through the Mirror.....	60
Dichotomy.....	62
Glass.....	63
(haiku).....	64
<i>Index of First Lines</i>	65

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's¹ 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.² 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.

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

² 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.³ 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.

³ 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

J U S T S A Y I N '

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

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

1. Conversations.....	
3. Because I talk to God a lot	
4 a.m.....	
A hollow ache settles in my chest	
Caterpillar letters unfurl.....	
Dreams are shattered glass of thought.....	
Forty lashes	
Here is the blood of sacrament,	
I am a boat without an oarsman.....	
I am blood and I am bleeding.....	
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.

WWW.LIANAMIR.COM