

On Twenty Four

I began this year in tears and know I will end it there soon. No need to feel bad for me, I am a birthday crier.

Birthdays build pressure to quickly make sense of the last year of a life, and I don't do well under pressure. Maybe this city is an unfortunate choice for a home then. Still, despite our deep incompatibility, I do love this place and hope we can figure our shit out to make it work. Six and a half years is enough time to fill a city with ghosts and I would feel terrible abandoning them. I schedule visitations to keep them alive. These outings, disguised as walks, make it clear that there isn't a block in Brooklyn I can pass through without some sensuous memory snapping like a rubber band into my chest. I can hear words thrown at me there, hands moving up me there, even smell an air that was once there in another season under different leaves. And after those waves, I feel the death there too, the absence.

Hmph. It is difficult to write a sentence without using I. To write without constantly centering myself is a resolution of mine. To simply write is a resolution too. It has been difficult to write at twenty four. I have been busy. Unemployed, but somehow busy. Busy being taught, carefully, on the nonsense of my heart. I cannot recall anything more capable of stealing words from my mouth quite like betrayal. Maybe because you cannot be betrayed by someone you do not love and to love someone who has betrayed you sits restlessly in the heart. The nonsense of it brings about more nonsense. I start to see how a word like betrayal could beget a word like revenge, both so ancient. And revenge is delicious to plan, to explore in my mind. But when beginning to invoke it, I feel my last meal come up. I breathe in karmic delight and breathe out vindictive foolishness.

So should I forge the theme of forgiveness out

of this year instead? Wash myself of my pain with a superhuman effort in compassion? That seems like something I would do, a fool like me. I preach too often on a societal failing in empathy, an individuals duty to transcend it. So why not be a woman of my word? Everyone looks at me like they know something I don't, they toss me a knowing wink.

When a lot of things happen to you all at once, it feels a lot like growing up. I have an inflated sense of maturity from living in this city all these years, where everything happens all the time. But the more I wrangle the meaning from the noise, the slimier and stickier I get. Strange, but I feel more growth happening now, as I type this absolute nonsense and allow it to fill me with a lack of meaning. Maybe there are too many ghosts asking me to visit them. At least that's what my friends say. Maybe I can gift attention to just a few small things and allow a hands-off observation reveal the nature of these beasts.

I'd like to attend a funeral. *To love someone long-term is to attend a thousand funerals of the people they used to be...* Well, I have yet to attend one of my funerals. But I don't like the awkward habit of stifling our tears. No, I'd like my funeral to have screaming. Everyone has to promise me they will hold my hand and scream! And then, I'll be happy. That's all I really want. Is it foolish to want to be happy? No, because there is a difference between seeking happiness and avoiding pain. Yes, and I do not confuse the two. After the funeral there will be a big, big party. With party hats and ice cream cake and we will all be wearing black.

I read my words over. I laugh. It is funny to not understand. It is silly to love a city so cold. It is nice to have ghosts who want a little too much of my time. It is my birthday and it is my funeral.

Don't you dare feel bad for me, I will cry as much as I'd like to.

**Cultivo una rosa blanca
en junio como enero
para el amigo sincero
que me da su mano franca.**

**Y para el cruel que me arranca
el corazón con que vivo,
cardo ni ortiga cultivo;
cultivo la rosa blanca.**

I cultivate a white rose
In July as in January
For the sincere friend
Who gives me his hand frankly.

And for the cruel person who tears out
the heart with which I live,
I cultivate neither nettles nor thorns:
I cultivate a white rose.

- José Martí