

Omen of Uneasiness
by Mario Alberto Obando Jr.

1

Not anything but uneasy
All glory be to the dollar
All pain be to the liver
If there is anything that bleeds
It sure as hell isn't your empathy

All I want to do is look away
I don't want to come back
I am terrified of your slow decay
I'm so afraid of seeing your ribs
Where there was once fullness

And yet, I know this is fleeting
This emptiness in apathy
Of scared faces staring back
At me when I lecture
Of heads down at the doctor's office

I regret that I can't walk through
A full house full of food, cousins
And angry and resentful siblings
Moving from the yellow kitchen,
To the pink living room, to the sofa
Where you yelled "ay mama"
When you thought abuela
Was in trouble

I drink straight from the faucet
I hug straight to the core
I cry only in the shower
I long in the middle of the party
I lament my loneliness

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While setting boundaries
I desire connection
I long for solitude
And yet, I miss all that isn't
Or could never be

Across this isthmus
To our burning suburbs
Grant me serenity
Grant me peace
An omen of this uneasiness

2
Cold-cut planchas with mustard
4:36am in the middle of La Sabana
Your oldest friend wants to buy my hat
A hat I bought for a dollar at the Goodwill
And all I want is to spend quality time
Maybe at a museum
Learning about our ancestral jade
And now, we're drunk

Who are we but lost
In search of feeling connected
Writing justifications for life
In the empire, holding onto mercy
Knowing full well,
Nuclear weapons don't care
About decolonial identities

I grasp onto the nostalgia
Because there seems little
To hold onto in the present
Artificial intelligence keeps calling
Keeps demanding our attention

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More abbreviations than love
which is it? A.I.? A.D.H.D.?
P.T.S.D.?
We're bitter, the jokes are over

There is an elegance though
Try handwashing your clothes
Observe your dry hands after so much
Cold water on humid days
Parched mustard skin
As you slowly sink into your recliner
Your final days, and breaths
Hardly a surgery can save you
Remember, mourn
All that is and was

Like capital,
The pancreas can't be accessed
Like the end,
We're drunk.

3
I am scared to love fully
I am afraid my best friend
And his parents will mock
My mother's labor, my mother's tongue
As they once did, mock me

I am scared to love fully
I am afraid my Kiko will fly away
And as the door remains open
And I search for you in the back alleys
Of our crammed parking lots
I know you died alone, scared, hungry,
Looking for your best friend

I am scared to love fully
I am afraid that you'll leave me
That you'll force me to El Norte
And then leave me here
While you end your days where I was born
That you'll ignore your responsibilities
And I'll watch your wife wither away
While I hold it together and fight for what you
Threw away

I am scared to love fully
And commit myself to disappointment
To cry, watch my beloved burn,
And be forced to listen to an old man
Lie
Even at death's door,
He likes it hot

In sonder, the fires here
And the insurance of burned homes
Are rhyming, but no song can
Capture all that I close off
My beloved, all that you are,
I am
For all that is love
Cannot be tamed, even named,
For all that it is,
I am
All that harms, we carry

4
The brown yoga instructor
Commits to a sound bath
And quietly whispers about

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Manifestation, energy and
Abundance, expensive training
Very little yield or rewards

How much trauma do we carry?
How many wounds do we open?
How many hail marys?
How many pretty mantras do we mask with?

I see you trying though
Going to therapy
Seeking out answers from other continents
Trying your best to define yourself
To be peaceful and mindful

An extension of compassion
For all our wanderlust nonsense
As nothing is either created or destroyed
And yet, we know better
Things, beings, ecosystems, the unnamed, can be
Created and destroyed

Truly, I embrace your call to action
I also click on the 30% tip
We are all really struggling, aren't we?
Who do we have to accept our choppy
Attempts to be better humans but each other?
The tips that bind us
The Affirmations that allow us to pay later
And pay it forward
The gratification and the mounting debt

The veil is not pulled over
The age of information
Everyone knows everything

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Everything knows everyone
The Age of Aquarius
Of interconnectedness
With little yield or rewards
Truth has left us long ago

5

Pull back the Carter Curtain
Listen to Harris telling us not to come
Watch Trump plot more raids
Trying to match Obama's numbers

9:56am in the foothills
Winding curves, carambolas fall at my feet
I stepped on the coffee beans
I learned to use a machete
I felt like I was someone I was meant to be, but unnamed

2:35pm in the foothills
I receive a phone call
It has been 7 years since we talked
I don't answer
I am scared
Terrified to love again

1:05am in the foothills
I am overwhelmed by how much I feel
That my disposition is awkward chuckles,
Silent grumbles and uncalculated social missteps
A trip onto the smog, and I overlook a ravine that leads
To fires that warm all the encampments
That at any moment can light this beautiful valley up
In flames

May all the projects keep you whole

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May all the projects keep us full
May all the projects keep us remembering
May all the projects keep us mortals
Don't let this disaster rot your insides
Name it, call me
Let's plan our next project
And name it nothing
Not anything, but uneasiness