

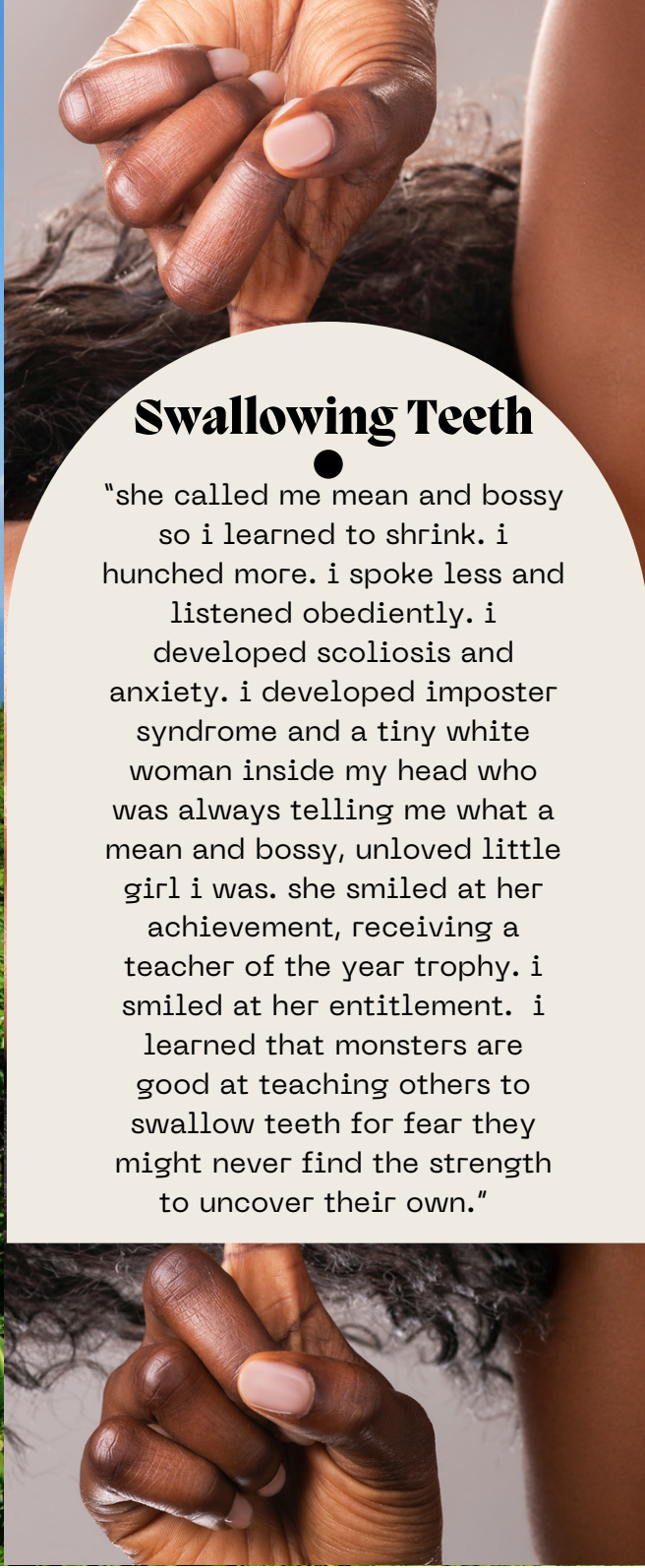
Poems by Melania Luisa Marte

Plantains And Our Becoming





1



Swallowing Teeth

"she called me mean and bossy
so i learned to shrink. i
hunched more. i spoke less and
listened obediently. i
developed scoliosis and
anxiety. i developed imposter
syndrome and a tiny white
woman inside my head who
was always telling me what a
mean and bossy, unloved little
girl i was. she smiled at her
achievement, receiving a
teacher of the year trophy. i
smiled at her entitlement. i
learned that monsters are
good at teaching others to
swallow teeth for fear they
might never find the strength
to uncover their own."

Telling Time

"i am (15)

and afraid that i've grown too big for my own skin.
everything about my existence feels wrong and untimely. i
want to die but instead, i write. time follows me.

i am (21) my mother has healed her anxiety but is triggered
when she sees the signs in me. a water fountain of
insecurities, tearing into oblivion. she begins to feel as if
time has betrayed us both.

2

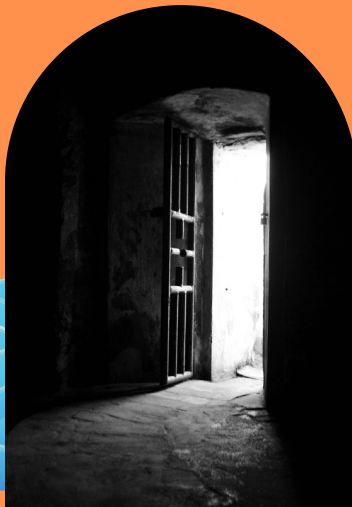


"i am (28) finally having morphed into ice cream worth
scooping. people applaud when i speak or breathe, or
smile. i finally know how to tell time and let time tell
me everything i want to hear: you will bend time. time
will be your only true friend. tell time what you want
and time will deliver. time will tell you the truth about
your destiny. trust the timing of you."

Synonyms for Stolen People



"once African. now confused.
once rooted. now floating.
tragic spirit. where you from? negra bella.
how you still black? negro linda. what got
'chu so uptight? hijxs de dios. what 'chu so
mad 'bout? where yo' people from? how free
is you? how Black is you? voodoo black?
plantain black? sugar cane black? what
island yo' ancestors drown in? how you
surrounded by water and scared to float?
which side will your privilege choose? how
you surrounded by water and scared to
float? which side will your privilege
choose? how you reckon you'll translate
this unknowing? what of the border
between your river? what of the tired
within your bones? you must remember that,
although stolen, you have always been
saved."





Climacteric Wonders

"i. don't. give. a. fuck. how a colonizer feels. a colonizer ain't done shit for me but remind me why my homies can't breathe. why my moma got a pain in her back. why my anxiety flares at the siren. the transatlantic human trafficking. the displacement. jim crow. revisionist storytelling. 3 countries. still, no land to call home... so you see sometimes, we just be dying to come home? how sometimes, that is the love story? black people make it home. the end?"



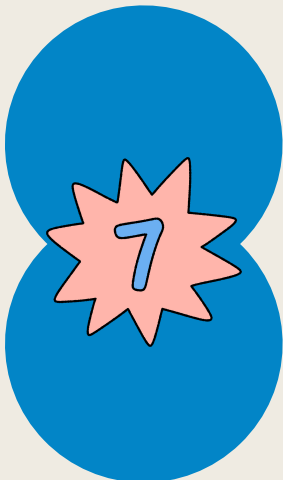
Future is A Space

"let us learn to leave space for ourselves in a future we can fathom. unperfected and still here – we are not meant to be robotic, just alive and green. we are simply meant to grow. together. intertwine delicately plow into me, respectfully. let our insides learn the language of worms. let our unraveling be holy & radiant. like the cosmos, we shine. same dirt, different minds, and imagined ideas. what would you do if your identity crisis could no longer be your personality trait? who would you be if you believed you had answers before you had anxiety?"



For Breonna Taylor

"ask me about peace and i will tell you about sleep. i will tell you about the nap that led me to my ancestors... maybe we want more justice. maybe we want more than the active exhaustion of proving why we deserve to exist. maybe we want to die and not be martyred. if she must die, can you let her soak up enough light that she will go in peace? if she must die, let it be in a dream so illustrious she never wakes up. let it be resting from the contracting of this worn body. let her heart not beat with the panic of a bullet wound. let it be still as the first day of may. may her body be more than a thing to escape. if she must die, give her a canopy with hibiscus flowers at the bed of her feet. soak her swollen hands in lavender oil. let her knees and chest bend towards the soil, let her mama hum her back inwards. play her that lovely homecoming song. if she must die, say her name."



The Body, An Ode

"ode to the body without trigger. ode to spirit's surrender. ode to my belly for healing and unraveling itself. ode to my brain for listening to its gut. ode to my spirit when it hums my body back. ode to this body coming back and back and running back and crawling back and making it back, home."

I Say, "You Are Loved."

"and my spine stops flinching.
and my arms unclench their fists.
and i cannot disassociate my
heart from my brain. and the
weight of the world becomes a
feather. and suddenly i remember
how to breathe. and my body
becomes an ode. and my
depression hums itself to sleep.
and my depression hums. and i
whisper goodbye. and i can feel
both of my grandma's prayers.
and my brothers, i love you's, ring
loud and clear. and my mama had
a dream and i listen to her gut.
and i remember that same divine
energy pulsates within me. and i
step into my power. and the water
consumes me. and i remember
how to swim. and i am running
around in the rain. and the sun. is
always dancing at my feet. and
palm trees sway with me and the
breeze. and i am always
surrounded by water. and i am
always surrounded by love. and
suddenly i remember that i too,
am love and sun and green
pastures and a beach. and the
water is also me. and i am in love
with the water. and the water
loves me back."

8



Libre

"and though it may have cost
the weight of my body and bones

and though i had to teach my hips how to
surfboardt anxiety to dust

and if all i have is these goosebumps,
smoke signals, and butterflies whispering
bright green nothings of life as joy at the
brown of my temple.

and if freedom never comes,
i settle into rest as my sweet revenge
my hallelujah
my mercy
my hammock"

