

Communication

Light flickers on my phone screen
Words flash in my line of sight
Dios bendiga, it reads
God bless

How are you, follows
A pause
I'm thankful I'm hidden behind a screen
I'm thankful he can't see the emotions across my face

Rage I try to suppress
Sadness I want to express
The bulge developing in my throat, a swollen lump of resentment

Hard for anyone to swallow

Happiness he cares
Patience at the effort
Annoyance at the persistence

How am I?
I'm the late night paper I toil over until the dark blanket of sky cracks and fissures into light
The wrinkles, crow's feet, and smile lines that form over a Friday night get together
The sinewy stretch of limb that moves in tandem to the drum of a sluggish day at work
The slumped shoulders a long day brings,
The spark of life that lights up a room,
Promise and potential

I am the click of keys as my response begins,
Countless times I've backspaced and had to read:
Dios bendiga
How are you

I am the question of where God was for you when I needed you.

A quiet moment and my lips purse
Releasing my tight grip, I shudder
I am beyond that moment of betrayal, abandonment, and sadness
The lump in my throat fades, the pit of my stomach blanketed with a tenuous peace
It has been a long year and a half

A pause, and my reply begins
Ben di cion

Blessings
Followed by
I'm good, dad
How are you?

Guilt

The wick nearly out
Smoke billowing
Trailing
Curling and unfurling
Enveloping my hunched shoulders
The sticky sweet scent
From the tea candle lit incense lamp
Is a small comfort
Light from my phone screen
Causes my eyes to squint

It's the girl

She struggles to make friends
She is too naive to see
I am no better
The aroma does little
To soothe my guilty conscience
If I tell her
"Please don't talk to me"
I am no better than
Those who shunned me
Those few years ago

I still remember the bitter bite
Of lonely
I remember lunches alone sitting
On a porcelain throne
My phone my only friend
Then
Nibbling on peanut butter and jelly
Wishing I were
Elsewhere
Hiding, because I did not have
The confidence nor the skill
To make myself happy
I felt like failure
Defined me

I felt my lack of friends
Was my fault
I did not know how to rise above
Like the trails of smoke from my candle
I was of singular interest
I limited myself, the main source of my own
Discontent

Years later I learned that I need to adjust
That failure does not define you
Not everything is your fault
And what is your fault
You accept and not dwell
You embrace your own flaws
You realize validation from your peers
Is irrelevant

I like to think of myself as a good person
And yet
When she talks to me
It is painful
I get flashbacks of a younger version of myself
And I want to keep a safe distance
For fear I fall back into old habits

But behind the screen
I am afraid
I am her only friend

Panic Switch

Tight across the span of my shoulders
Weight plaited through my ribcage
Heavy

Ribbon bound
Tight as marrow in bone
Visceral

Head bowed to ease the effort
Thoughts fleeting
Fester

“Don’t think so hard,” they say
The dread swelling in my gut
Laughs

Inhale
Focus on your breathes
Exhale

This moment will pass