Poems of La Muerte Baila

9 collaborative poems by Yosimar Reyes with Teatro Visión and the 418 community members who responded to our poetry prompts

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Ancestors Speak: A Collective Poem

I'm here in spirit
Todo lo que hice lo hice para ti
Know that I never truly left
if at any point in your life you miss me just remember
the great times we had together
Si me extrañas yo estoy ahí
en tu corazón

When you call upon my name remember
I was funny, caring and energetic
Yo quiero que mi legado sea mi arte
y que pongan chocolates en la mesa de
mis recuerdos
I want my legacy to be for you to continue
discovering new things
write the songs I left unwritten
finish what I started
we do this
for the future of our kids

I will be by your shoulder
When the wind is blowing it means I am hugging you
I will protect you
In the event that you ever miss my presence
just know that I believe in you

We are all future ancestors
and when we meet again
we will laugh
a huge roar
like thunder
Celebration

I want my funeral to be a party
a celebration of life
with all the people who loved me

I give you permission to get drunk in my honor
pass out on floor
with a tequila bottle

Dance till your clothes are sticky
fill your belly with good food
because you miss me

I want to be sitting in the corner of the room
like a spider
watching

Warm bodies
dancing like there is no tomorrow

I want fireworks and flowers
huge speakers
blasting cumbia for hours

I want to be the laughter
and the joy
be the pathway
to a new horizon
Muerte del Migrante

Cuando me muera
quiero que me entierren en mi tierra
quiero
que pongas mi cuerpo en un avión
y me regreses
al lugar donde nací

no quiero morir
lejos
de la casa que deje
quiero
estar al lado de mi madre
sentir
la humedad de la tierra
y descansar en paz

Cuando yo me vine a este lado
v vine con la ilusión de algún día regresar
v vine sabiendo
que al cruzar el desierto
mi destino
sería una lucha

y ahora
que mi cuerpo se cansa
que solo me quedan
las memorias
de mi casa

quiero regresar
y sentir un puño de tierra
sobre mi tumba
en mi honor
que crezca un árbol de mangos

quiero que al probarlos
recuerden
que dulce es vivir
Muertito

soy el muertito
que cada noviembre
se despierta
al ver tus velas
al oler las comidas que preparas

esas flores que pones sobre mi tumba
me recuerdan a los campos que rerecoría

que bonito es recordar

pero por qué lloras
si en mi vida
yo fui alegre
porque tu llanto
si te acuerdas
de la voz en mi canto

acuérdate de lo bonito
que es vivir
lo bonito que es sonreír

así te quiero ver
cada ves que pienses
en mi memoria
una sonrisa como sol

soy el muertito
que descansa
pero quiero que sepas
que aquí estoy
en momentos de tristeza
aquí estoy
y estaré
Oración de Lluvia

A todos le llega su hora
este mundo es una bola
rueda y rueda
como pirinola

La ruleta de la vida
como laberinto sin salida
pero aquí estamos
con la boca al cielo
que llueva que llueva
las bendiciones hacia la tierra
que llueva que llueva
un río de risas
para
calmar
las tormentas en nuestras vidas
Orgullo

Cuando se muere una jota
all that is left is the glitter and the lights

remember the drunken nights at the club
te acuerdas de los tacos
after we left Splash or Lido’s

the men, the women and sometimes times both
pos ya que
remember how we created our own sense of home
when our mothers cursed us
when our fathers felt ashamed of us
we found each other
in the lights
in the music
in our bodies
we created our own sense of place

té acuerdas
of the first boy you kissed
under an ultra red light
a cumbia playing in the background

or the first girl whose hair you smelled
remember
the taste of corona con sal y limón on her lips

how that night just felt right

cuando se muere una jota
we are all taught to fear going to hell
maybe that is why we try to recreate heaven here

remember how the club almost felt like a ceremony
how in one night you would sweat all the pain away
in one night
you forget
that this world thinks of you differently
that this world condemns you to burn

what a sweet flame we are
nosotros los gays
to continue shining
even in the afterlife
Recuerdo

When I transition into the spirit world
I want the world to remember me
for inventing the next big invention
for my personality which is weird and crazy
my contributions to this city

I want to be remembered for the love and courage
that lived within me
Cuando me muera quiero ser recordada
por ayudar a los niños

I want to be remembered for encountering aliens
be remembered as the guy that created flying cars
I want to be remembered for my cooking
for being a good person
for the joy I’ve brought to the world
how brave I was

I want my legacy to be
my writing
the jokes I’ve told
the house I built in the land I left
I want my legacy to be my children
the respect I taught them,
the love I gave them,
the dreams I encourage

I want to be remembered
for writing this poem
Returning Home

They say death is the great equalizer
for when we die
we all return
to darkness

we only step into the light
to learn
what joy means

did you know
you are placed in this world
to know what the sky looks like
you are here
so you can remember
how warm a hug is

in the darkness
all we have
is memory
we become ancestors so we can guide our beloved

How do you want to be remembered?

When they bring flowers in your honor
What words do you want them to speak of you?

What will your legacy be?

when your grandchildren
speak your name
What prayers will they say?

You are here so collect stories like photographs
pay attention to the sounds
let your tongue memorize the taste of what it means
to be alive
pay attention
we are all returning soon
we are all going back home
soon
Everyone is always scared of death
like a dark shadow
or a scary clown

when you say death
people get spooked

but I am not
My mami
tells me that before this land was named
    a white man’s name
it used to be indigenous

Indigenous people have always known death
to be a friend
they believed that you never really die
all a human being is energy
so when we die our energy doesn’t just go away
it gets transferred
into other things

your body becomes soil
your breath is absorbed by plants
all the words you spoke are engraved
    in someone’s mind

When I die I want to come back as the nectar
    in a flower
I want to be a bumblebee
and sting all the people that were mean to me

I want to be the leaves on a tree
just swaying back and forth like a swing

I want to be a cloud
on the days that I am happy release a cool mist
on the days that I am angry let out a loud thunder
everyone is always scared of death
but not me
cause I know
I am indigenous
and one day I will stand as mighty as a redwood tree
The poems in this book were written in October 2017 and introduced at Teatro Visión’s production of La Muerte Baila devised by Rebecca Martinez and the Milagro Theater Ensemble, October 12-22, 2017 at the School of Arts and Culture at the Mexican Heritage Plaza in San José, California. 418 community members contributed to these poems by responding to prompts about healing, broken hearts, and transitioning to the afterlife. To everyone who was a part of creating these poems: ¡Gracias!

Yosimar Reyes is the artist in residence at Define American, a media and culture organization dedicated to shifting the conversation surrounding immigration and identity in a changing America. He is a nationally acclaimed poet, educator, performance artist, and public speaker. Born in Guerrero, Mexico, and raised in East San Jose, California, Reyes explores the themes of migration and sexuality in his work.

Teatro Visión is a Chicanx theater company serving the Latinx and other diverse communities of the Santa Clara Valley and the greater San Francisco Bay Area with a mission to create theater rooted in Chicanx and Latinx experiences to inspire the people of Santa Clara Valley and beyond to feel, think, and act to create a better world. Established in 1984, Teatro Visión has commissioned, developed, and produced over 60 plays for an audience of more than 145,000 patrons.

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