

Ode to Youth
for Jack Agüeros

Live now. Search for dreams that fill you with life.
Avoid strange jungles with headhunters
and traps that skin you alive.
Avoid haters who do not love you or themselves,
who poison the world with bitter meals.

Survival is the art of living. Joy is found within.

One day you will not remember all that was so urgent and precious,
bridges of hope you crossed, brass rings you caught,
high heels you hunted, diamonds you desired,
quiet mornings when mockingbirds sang you awake in summer
from trees outside your window,
the calm rush of ocean waves and squealing gulls riding the wind.

All memories of these things will dissolve. And with them
will go the hurt of a thousand insincerities and rejections,
bad feelings from angry words when your beloved ran to another,
contractions, painful births and the ones that were pulled
from your sacred womb.

You will forgive your enemies when the reasons for hating have disappeared.
The evening news will be a jumble of depraved rantings and incoherent stories
from warring tribes.

One day nothing more will matter than eating and sleeping.

You will no longer crave endearing embraces
that held you through nights of passion
or those tender kisses across your face
that sent your heart racing into bliss.

You will stop waiting for the touch
of another's hand in yours reaching into your soul

or the caring caress of their body in your bed.

The years of nurturing and growing old together
will cease to exist. The flood of birthdays, anniversaries
and exchanges of gifts will fade into the great distance
of forgetfulness.

One day everyone will see that your spirit has long departed.

What remains will be an empty shell,
a shadow devoid of dreams, a hollow tree, dried and broken
without the scent or sweetness of blossoms that celebrate life.

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