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**I’m Nobody! Who are you? (260)**

**Emily Dickinson**

I’m Nobody! Who are you?

Are you – Nobody – too?

Then there’s a pair of us!

Don’t tell! they’d advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!

How public – like a Frog –

To tell one’s name – the livelong June –

To an admiring Bog!

**to make use of water**

**Safia Elhillo**

**dilute**

i forget the arabic word for economy i forget  
the english word for عسل forget the arabic  
word for incense & english word for مسكين  
arabic word for sandwich english for وله &  
صيدلية & مطعم & safia  
/stupid girl, atlantic got your tongue/

**quench**

i think i can take care of myself because i  
only broke one plate the day wael died left it  
in the sink for hours watched water fill the  
seams of the mosaic & only let myself think  
once of the crossed ocean how we thought it  
was enough to keep us safe

**blur**

back home we are plagued by a politeness  
so dense even the doctors cannot call things  
what they are  
my grandfather’s left eye  
swirled thick with smoke  
what my new mouth can call glaucoma  
while the arabic still translates to  
the white water

**wash**

i think i can take care of myself  
a stranger’s sour mouth scraped  
the name off my body but i keep quiet  
i am last in the shower line  
i let it remain a household joke  
how i finish all the hot water

**swim**

i want to go home

**dissolve**

i want to go home

**drown**

half don’t even make it out or across you get to be ungrateful you get to be homesick from safe inside the folds of your blue american passport do you even understand what was lost to bring you here.

**I AM TOO PRETTY FOR SOME ‘UGLY LAWS’**

Lateef McLeod

I am not suppose to be here

in this body,

here

speaking to you.

My mere presence

of erratic moving limbs

and drooling smile

used to be scrubbed

off the public pavement.

Ugly laws used to be

on many U.S. cities’ law books,

beginning in Chicago in 1867,

stating that “any person who is

diseased, maimed, mutilated,

or in any way deformed

so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object,

or an improper person to be allowed

in or on the streets, highways, thoroughfares,

or public places in this city,

shall not therein or thereon

expose himself to public view,

under the penalty of $1 for each offense.”

Any person who looked like me

was deemed disgusting

and was locked away

from the eyes of the upstanding citizens.

I am too pretty for some Ugly Laws,

Too smooth to be shut in.

Too smart and eclectic

for any box you put me in.

My swagger is too bold

to be swept up in these public streets.

You can stare at me all you want.

No cop will buss in my head

and carry me away to an institution.

No doctor will diagnose me

a helpless invalid with an incurable disease.

No angry mob with clubs and torches

will try to run me out of town.

Whatever you do,

my roots are rigid

like a hundred-year-old tree.

I will stay right here

to glare at your ugly face too.

### **SO MUCH**

I hear their painful cries jut up from cracks on the street.  
The block is a scorching frying pan,  
frying my brothers on the pavement.  
Our bodies are etched on the concrete,  
blood drenched as permanent ink.  
Chalk should not outline our death bed  
or a body bag be our first casket.  
Bullets lurch out of guns,  
slice the air, and  
pierce the thin borders of our black skin.  
Eat away at our muscle and bones,  
borough through sinews and blood vessels,  
until it reaches and stops our hearts.  
It is not just the gang member on the corner  
whose aim we have to dodge,  
but also police on the beat  
whose itchy trigger fingers  
leave us with our brain matter  
splattered on the concrete.  
Now we have to watch out for the neighborhood watchmen.  
The wanna-be-cops who think we are foreign to our own neighborhood.  
Trayvon had a hoodie on to protect him from the rain,  
but it didn’t protect him from the bullet from Zimmerman’s gun.  
Old George just couldn’t help being a deadly Don Quixote,  
and shoot at every black boy,  
claiming he was a hardened criminal.  
My coco skin is not a target for your gun.  
It is the sacred encasing of God’s masterpiece  
that gives warmth and joy to every loved one it touches.  
No bullet will destroy what God has made immortal.  
We will all rise again one day to walk under the sun.

**Afro-Latina**

**Elizabth Acavedo**

Afro-Latina,

Camina conmigo.

Salsa swagger

anywhere she go

como

'¡la negra tiene tumbao!

¡Azúcar!'

Dance to the rhythm.

Beat the drums of my skin.

Afrodescendant,

the rhythms within.

The first language

I spoke was Spanish.

Learned from lullabies

whispered in my ear.

My parents’ tongue

was a gift

which I quickly forgot

after realizing

my peers did not understand it.

They did not understand me.

So I rejected

habichuela y mangú,

much preferring Happy Meals

and Big Macs.

Straightening my hair

in imitation of Barbie.

I was embarrassed

by my grandmother’s

colorful skirts

and my mother’s

eh brokee inglee

which cracked my pride

when she spoke.

So, shit, I would poke fun

at her myself,

hoping to lessen

the humiliation.

Proud to call myself

American,

a citizen

of this nation,

I hated

Caramel-color skin.

Cursed God

I’d been born

the color of cinnamon.

How quickly we forget

where we come from.

So remind me,

remind me

that I come from

the Taínos of the río

the Aztec,

the Mayan,

Los Incas,

los Españoles

con sus fincas

buscando oro,

and the Yoruba Africanos

que con sus manos

built a mundo

nunca imaginado.

I know I come

from stolen gold.

From cocoa,

from sugarcane,

the children

of slaves

and slave masters.

A beautifully tragic mixture,

a sancocho

of a race history.

And my memory

can't seem to escape

the thought

of lost lives

and indigenous rape.

Of bittersweet bitterness,

of feeling innate,

the soul of a people,

past, present and fate,

our stories cannot

be checked into boxes.

They are in the forgotten.

The undocumented,

the passed-down spoonfuls

of arroz con dulce

a la abuela's knee.

They're the way our hips

skip

to the beat of cumbia,

merengue

y salsa.

They're in the bending

and blending

of backbones.

We are deformed

and reformed

beings.

It's in the sway

of our song,

the landscapes

of our skirts,

the azúcar

beneath our tongues.

We are

the unforeseen children.

We're not a cultural wedlock,

hair too kinky for Spain,

too wavy for dreadlocks.

So our palms

tell the cuentos

of many tierras.

Read our lifeline,

birth of intertwine,

moonbeams

and starshine.

We are every

ocean crossed.

North Star navigates

our waters.

Our bodies

have been bridges.

We are the sons

and daughters,

el destino de mi gente,

black

brown

beautiful.

Viviremos para siempre

Afro-Latinos

hasta la muerte.

**THE MAGIC WAND**

**Lynn Manning**

Quick-change artist extraordinaire,

I whip out my folded cane

and change from black man to blind man

with a flick of my wrist.

It is a profound metamorphosis—

From God gifted wizard of roundball

dominating backboards across America,

To God-gifted idiot savant composer

pounding out chart-busters on a cockeyed whim;

From sociopathic gangbanger with death for eyes

to all-seeing soul with saintly spirit;

From rape deranged misogynist

to poor motherless child;

From welfare-rich pimp

to disability-rich gimp;

And from ‘white man’s burden’

to every man’s burden.

It is always a profound metamorphosis.

Whether from cursed by man to cursed by God;

or from scriptures condemned to God ordained,

My final form is never of my choosing;

I only wield the wand;

You are the magicians.

**Disorder**

**Chris Loos**

I have ADHD

And ADD

And OCD

And a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,I,j,k,l,m,n,o,p,o,p,o,p,

Oh my God I'm doing it again,

That was so fun!

Let's try it again backwards.

Maybe,

Just maybe,

I'll remember it

the first time,

Because last time

The world said I was mentally disabled.

Am I disabled?

An I disabled?

Am I disabled because I'm not able to be stable sitting at the labeled table.

Oooooohhhhhjh that rhymed.

Am I bipolar to?

Or am I just funny? Because everybody else is laughing.

HAHAHAHAHA HILARIOUS.

Laughing because mom was in the hospital

And I forgot to take my medicine.

I've had all kinds of medication,

Antidepressants,

anti anxiety medication,

Ritalin,

straterra,

vyvance,

concerta,

adderall,

add em all up,

60 milligrams

Used to be

80 milligrams.

I'm hungry!

I haven't ate ALL day!

Can we go to McDonald's?

I want a large sprite

And a bigmack

Bigmack

Bigmack

Big stack of prescriptions that aren't telling me

the side effects are worse

than the disorder.

OH MY GOD!!! SHE IS CUTE.

Sometimes I shout

the most obvious things,

Sometimes I can't sit still,

Sometimes I daydream,

Sometimes I,

Sometimes I,

All the time they give me pills

Filled with the daily routine of

not eating

Not sleeping,

Not talking,

No distractions what so ever.

And everyday I'm faced with the decision

Of taking these pills,

Small capsules injected with who knows what,

And shoving them down my throat.

It's like

It's like

It's like

"My mind is telling me no.

But by mommy, my mommy is telling me yes" and so are my doctors,

Brothers,

Sisters,

Family,

Friends,

And I'm crazy because

I'd rather let my mind temple run through time

Back to 99

When I became a statistic.

Back when I was

1 in every 4 boys taking medicine every morning.

But now.

Now,

The medicines we take are

Nationally classified with cocaine and meth.

Now,

2.7 million children like me take mind altering drugs

Every morning.

Now,

Straterra and antidepressants

Are linked to thoughts of death,

0 to 5 year olds

taking these medicines

could fill 6 football stadiums,

1 out of every 5 high school boys are diagnosed with ADHD

And 67% of them take medication,

Medication,

Medication.

Are we there yet?

I like that movie!

The acting was

Flawless.

His daughter was.

Ok ok, stay on task.

I know I have alot of disorders,

Yes, I do.

But I'm still taking

AP and IB classes.

I'm on honor roll again.

I can control my adhd,

I write poetry

Poetry

Poetry

baby,

Courtesy of disorders,

Courtesy of statistics,

Compliments of months alone sitting in my bedroom

Thinking of ways to be normal,

Because apparently.

I'm mentally disabled.