

All you want
(a series of lies)



ColinGee



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'Cosas de mi pueblo' is an excerpt from *Notes from my pueblo* by Ermilo Abreu Gómez, tr. Colin Gee.

Cosas de mi pueblo: estampas de Yucatán
Ermilo Abreu Gómez
B. Costa-Amic, 1957

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for AOO

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Ten more years like this year
in which I drank two bottles of scotch a week
from May until July
stepped the wet grass to the woods
caroming the trunks
this one tree far in the middle
with the week's empties
throwing it back into the tonsils
far back between the gaping teeth
into the deciduous rockpile
shivering from fear of so much foliage
woods exhaling from the leashes
cried a tear, caroming back to the lighthouse
just let it fall
passing a look like a kamikaze across the stars
trusting one last look would last
A quick death by my own hand:
I sent the collated ms to grandma and she liked it
One good book every month
Reading one I mean
not writing one
I mean
fuck that
One epileptic cumshot every morning
The rain that brings the insects
make it fall on my parted lips
The flame that goes always before me
guiding my steps
it is my cocka
mamie own christ
If you want

I can help you remember
Just write it on one of these rocks
and we will bury it in the sand.

Saturday noon

But first we are drinking. Squeezed a liter of orange juice onto ice cubes, which is 2 parts, the ice reverse-baptized in our dry chile and salt rub, a dusting of confectioner's sugar, and shook it with 1 part white mezcal, non-flashy espadín from our mezcalero over at Matatlán, land of green agave.

It is smokey like the woodfires coming off the Sierra Madre and the dust of burros down the arroyo off your shirt. We call them magueylitas, sweet and picante.

Sat back to relish the wreckage. Talked about the words we would like to take back at parties.

Magueylita

1 liter OJ

1/2 liter mezcal

5 shakes Tabasco

3 pinches sal de maguey or salt + dry chile rub

3 tablespoons powdered sugar

ice

tumblers

people

time

Keep seeing contrails

Keep seeing contrails
at cruising altitude
3 days now
and it brings the fear.
Packed in by donkey
Not a smoke in miles
Contrails that hush
spring strange vapors.

Tomatillos and tomatotes

She makes the salsa with green and red tomatoes, salt, garlic,
and two kinds of dried chile. We sip our magueylitas
aggressively in the shadow of the storm here in the valley.

Every house has its cricket, and ours was under the sideboard,
and chirruped as the rain came down in sheets at 2 pm
because that is when it is storming this season.

Last year it was 6 pm, but next year it will be totally dry and
there will be fires in the mesquite away off on the hills and in
town housefires people will blame on the fireworks factory,
clandestine and right next door until the ragged explosion
takes the door and roof off.

Cause of accident: a bolt of lightning, out of the blue, cops
write in their report.

She deveined the chiles but now is adding back the seeds by
the handful, *que no pica nada*, and they go round and round in
the electric blender.

Give or take a hundred years

Anne was my daughter
replied Mr. Knox
always dressed for a party.
She perished in 1757
the year we set sail
of the spit-choking cholera.
But this is 1659
gasped my friend
recalling the conversation
some months later
bracing himself on a cross-swell,
You are from the future.
I'm not from the future
That would be impossible,
grunted the captain.
He said
16 or 1757, then
eyeing the bulging cumuli
jagged spears of lightning
over the Yucatán
horizon –
noting the stiff westerly
blown not so much upon the sea
as onto the crags
lonesome molehills
of the great peninsula on their lee.
1657 or 1757
What difference does it make?
Looking back at it now
we are apt to agree.

Give or take a hundred years
he said,
the girl is dead.

Fig eater beetle on a string

We are not going to tell you that no animals were harmed in the making of the feast, which involved a heaving kilo of pork loin and ribs, but the fig eater beetles were not tortured by us or used as playthings or rendered into beetle stock to thin the salsa.

That would be the kids across the hall, not I mean into the soup but who tie strings to the sticky, slow legs of the beetles and then cry, Fly away, mayate! Mayate, fly! The beetle wings that whir like toy helicopters are the color of oil slicks that slip and ride under the mangrove trees, but others are jet black.

You have to fry the salsa after blending with cumin, oregano, clove, and cinammon.

And there was a half case of beer chilling in the fridge, that we
got in there at all angles then had to take out gingerly with
two hands.

Beetle be free

Impromptu haikus in the mirror

¡Rayos! Hide the scissors.

When angels meet

When angels meet and crash
in midair
the sound is sweet like bells
in the churchyard

Florida water

We are cooking now, beans in the clay pot that is larger than the apartment, bigger than the world. We wish we could hide under it, mingle our stink with the stink of onion and beans. Maybe we make Florida water with rose petals and tap water, then daub it on our necks. Maybe we just sit and stinking.

You have to burn the diced onion in the oil, not brown it, to give it the flavor of the Revolution, of gunsmoke over pewter plates. This is a living tombstone, so do not baby the onion. These beans will accompany the greasy sauce and pork loin and beer.

This is the family recipe, but we always write it in code because you can't have it, though we will gladly cook for you and share everything we have.

It is to feed an army and the soldaderas. Shift your bandolier
as you pull up a stool, hike up your skirt, tuck in.

Chileajo Isabel, modified for the war

87 kilos pork loin with ribs

478.5 chiles guajillo

565 chiles costeño

21.5 kilos green tomato

65.5 kilos red tomato

41 kilos potato

71 cloves of garlic

26.2 balls of clove

76 sticks of cinammon

770 grains of cumin

75 sprigs of oregano

Candelabra

Throughout the castle there is no one
not awake
glimmering softly or leaping bravely
with flame
from the exposed root
the hissing tusk
as the rumor begins to circulate
from the elders up
and down
the halls until the lamp
lit air is full of the soft whispers
the tapestries dance with the suction
the kick
of heat from running mouths.
Meanwhile
the unsleeping cries of human men
thud and chunk of their bottles beat in the air
the singing and merry shouts
the happy shrieks of wenches
the crackle of the major fires
the yipping of the favorite hounds
the crack of boots and shoes for the circus
the in the cobbled courtyards
the yurk and gobble of children and gamehens
the pies sliding on wood
people slipping on the straw.
We know that it is not given to us to live forever
sings the elder from the pit of the Christcandle
speaking from deep within the red of glass
through the layered splashes of his own lifefat

leaping
long dried now against the inner sides.
The tallow fat that burns
combined with the strength of the stalk that bears the fire
feeds the flame that gives us life and speech.
What gives us the power to cast the shadow
destroy the works of man
including
buildings
clothing
and recorded wisdom
is what eats us.

Soul of the Bishop's son

Across the street they stretched a blue tarp supported by two-by-fours to create an awning. They set up thirty folding chairs and over the garage they hung a large black wreath. Suddenly the wreath was there, like a cosmic spider.

Into the boiling water go the potatoes, sliced into wedges so when soft they will soak up the spicy red salsa and grease and beans. The weather has turned cold!

The dead neighbor was son of the Bishop, the neighbor kids shouted happily to us, he kept his woman in a house on our street all this time! This we had suspected. They freed their mayates about an hour ago, instructions of their mother.

Stick a fork in those potatoes, in the boiled pork, and in the
Bishop's son.

The cat killer

Everyone slept together
girls ranging from six to sixteen
in the corridor
after sweet bread and coffee
exhausted
tipped
on mattresses thrown down
for the occasion
they had propped against the wall for playtime
The cat killer
mom as a girl
with her sister and cousin
threw their weight against this mattress
One two three
Uno dos tres ¡va!
down came the bed
strangely lumpy
squeaking strangely
The girls threw themselves down
passed out under blankets.
In the morning
raise the beds
there under hers
the calico cat
smothered to death.
The cat killer felt nothing.

Covered wagon days

Every kitchen must have a blender, chocolate bowl, and beater. We removed layers of clothes, hers like my grandmother's and mine like a soccer coach's.

Intoxicated now by the rain and mezcal, talk turned to the movies, as the aroma of beans and frying salsa and papas warmed the house. Cantinflas flickered against a gloomy wall, and the cricket maintained a terrified lull. We doubted it was gone -- it was our cricket.

It was about 5 in the afternoon on a rainy day.

We looked at the discarded scarves, blouses, sweatpants and Crocs and depression and panic filled the space between us for just a second because we knew we had too many things.

But we beat the chocolate until it was foamy before pouring it into the mugs. It was foam from horse and buggy days, covered wagon days. The blender still reeked of salsa, red with crimson flakes and brown seeds like a thousand sailors overboard in a sea of blood, and the barro beans of gunsmoke, so we used the wooden hot chocolate bowl from covered wagon days.

Our cricket emerged from behind the loveseat, melancholy and contemplative.

Talk turned to human problems.

At the end of my life

At the end of my life
I was twenty-nine
& fell in love for the third time
and wrote about it.
Not with any of the women I knew, either
who told me *you amo*
waiting for my response
with teeth like knives
eyes like hard pads of butter
fresh from the fridge
not melting on the cold skillet
not about to, either,
since there was no one in the kitchen
but with voices that defended the right:
How can you cook without me?
Your meat is going to stick and burn
and your little round russet potatoes too!
But with one little stranger
Younger than a baby
Scared when I shouted
Happy when I smiled
Stern when I drank and
Just as hot as a pancake
when I lied.

Stains on the wall

There has been an accident but that is not blood on the wall,
on the ceiling. I mishandled the salsa and it flew from its
recepticle like that time your mother came into the room
saying she was fine, spraying blood all over the ceiling from a
hand.

You have to boil the red and green tomatoes to get the skin off
the red tomatoes first. You have to boil the meat with a chunk
of onion for a few hours before you fry it.

The stains represent ships, friars, ducks, kites, moons,
soldiers, castles, suns, and a thousand things from the valley
before the automobile that an adobe wall will know.

Brain matter from an unlucky ricochet in 1916, for example,
whether accident or murder. But our house is rebar and
concrete and paint.

Later you will see the salsa in the hot oil turn a little brown
when it is ready.

Fueled by their own virtue

Thru seasons ping-ponged by pain
Vehicle gets lighter
tidy, slightly higher
on the skulls
some soft n mildewed
mulchy green
others old n hard
rock hard
bumped in a miniature game.

Burnt milk

We are eating chile garlic broth, chileajo, mother, and for dessert there is burnt milk ice cream from the coldest little steel well the man carries all over town on his tricycle and churns like butter.

We are frying the garlic with the browned pork loin, then adding the salsa in a sizzling mess, then cutting it with meat juice from the boiled meat, then just letting it simmer.

The clouds have parted and the sky is gaping at us in our private room in just our jocks and bras.

We are serving the feast with fresh tortillas and cordite and our beans.

Attila Chávez García

The general Chávez García
came over to your house
this past weekend
him and a bunch of his underlings
installed himself in your library
where you like to sit at your rolltop
stare out at the valley and ranch.

Smashed a bunch of plates
made your wife and daughters
wait on his excellence
hand and foot.

I like it here
Paco
he told you from your favorite chair
tapping a large tooth with the
the tip of your favorite pen
favorite daughters
Maria and Sofia
rubbing the royal feet
Chávez's soldier flunkies cracking at a crate
of your best Christmas wine.

He said
I think we'll stay.

The mariachis came
staggering in from the barn
with a yip

began strumming.
Someone lit off rockets by the chapel
where they were forcing the priest
to read from a book
gesticulate like he meant it
for Christ sake
wine splashing
porto gurgling
the room
a spinnin.

The second to the last thing you did
walk into the kitchen
get the pistol off the belt off the
the man on your wife
shoot her dead
through the side of the temple.

Soldier fell off to one side
battered in blood
and flour
and you did the last thing you
would ever do.

The painted leopard
gulped from a glass
Told Maria
Did I say use your hands?

Cosas de mi pueblo (excerpt)

The American and Spanish kitchens have combined to produce the rarest and most savory entrées in the world. They almost always require a lot of sauce and are a pain in the neck to prepare. In order to get them ready it is not enough to know the recipes and throw the ingredients together. You have to have what they call seasoning sense, a tough thing. There are grandmas who with just a sip can tell if the food needs salt or has too much cumin or is well done or not. The list of entrées is infinite. To illustrate this I will mention a few names here: squash broth, chile garlic broth, potatoes in Mexican salsa, tripe, meat stew, stuffed chayotes, stuffed eggplant, pulled pork, blood sausage, spicy tamales, bean tamales, corn tamales, stuffed cheese, black mole, green mole, mole Valladolid, dogfish bread, suul potato.

Colin Gee is founder and editor of *The Gorko Gazette*. He studied classical linguistics at the University of Wisconsin and has worked as a language teacher in Mexico since 2011. His collection of short stories and novellas *The Penult*, which contains over 80 stories, was published in 2023 by LEFTOVER Books. Colin also has had works of the Mexican author Guadalupe Dueñas (D. R. 2017, Fondo de Cultura Económica) in translation published in *Exacting Clam*, and a lot of other verse and prose around the web. *All you want* was written during Christmas 2017 as a love letter to AOO, and she was not offended, although no one is sure if she actually read the whole thing. *Te amo, mi beleta, este librito es para ti.*