

WORDS OF HOPE

A COLLECTION OF POEMS ABOUT DOMESTIC
ABUSE AND SURVIVAL

SANCTUARY FOR FAMILIES

SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP COALITION

VOLUME I

WORDS OF HOPE

**A COLLECTION OF POEMS ABOUT DOMESTIC
ABUSE AND SURVIVAL**



Sanctuary for Families

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT

Sanctuary for Families 3

The Survivor Leadership Coalition 4

PREFACE

A letter from SLC Director Shobana Powell 7

WORDS OF HOPE

Fatima: As I Go 11

Monica: On Being Kind 12

Moreno: Covid-19 15

Maria: Un diez de mayo más* 16

Renata: The Gift That Cannot Be Returned 19

Flore: Life Goes On 20

Zoraya: ME 23

Joan: Season of Confusion 24

Sweet D: Shackles Broken 27

Leticia: El virus incierto* 28

Sandra: The Voice 31

***TRANSLATIONS 33**



**Sanctuary
for Families**

JANUARY



**Sanctuary
for Families**

**In love t
is no vic**

ABOUT



Founded in 1984 as a small network of safe homes for families affected by domestic violence, Sanctuary for Families is today New York State's largest nonprofit agency dedicated exclusively to serving victims of domestic violence, sex trafficking, and related forms of gender violence. Over the past three decades, Sanctuary has empowered tens of thousands of survivors to leave abusive partners and create independent lives for themselves and their families.

Sanctuary provided shelter, clinical, legal, and economic empowerment services to nearly 9,000 survivors last year. Sanctuary's 200 employees work out of 10 office and shelter locations in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx, including nine large public housing complexes, and can communicate with clients in over 20 languages. This includes many Spanish-speaking employees to address the needs of the city's large monolingual Spanish communities.

Since its inception, Sanctuary has recognized that safe shelter and crisis services are just the first steps in a survivor's journey. To truly escape a life of abuse, survivors require a safety net of support services to ensure that they remain safe and achieve long-term financial and housing stability. This has informed Sanctuary's growth into one of the nation's leading holistic service providers for survivors of gender violence.

Learn more at www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org

MISSION

Sanctuary for Families is dedicated to the safety, healing and self-determination of victims of domestic violence and related forms of gender violence. Through comprehensive services for our clients and their children, and through outreach, education and advocacy, we strive to create a world in which freedom from gender violence is a basic human right.

THE SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP COALITION

Sanctuary for Families is deeply proud of our Survivor Leadership program. Formerly called the Mentors Program, Sanctuary's Survivor Leadership Coalition (SLC) has evolved over the last 20 years into a 12-week training and certification course designed to prepare former clients to make system-wide change through advocacy, training, program development, and working directly with other survivors. The training course includes public speaking, vicarious trauma, self-care, media re-exploitation, advocacy, and boundary setting.

Photo: Survivor Leadership Coalition Retreat - August 2019.





PREFACE

A letter by Shobana Powell, Former director of Sanctuary's Survivor Leadership Coalition

First, I must say that it has been my great joy and honor to work alongside this team of powerful, intelligent, creative and deeply compassionate survivors recognized in this book and the many survivors who shaped and led this work behind the scenes.

History is rarely told by the marginalized and oppressed, and when creating this book, we set out to change that.

Gender-based violence centers on the abuse of power and control. This book is an act of reclaiming that agency. Whether the authors were experienced poets or had never written before, writing alone was an act of courage, of combatting the silence, of challenging narratives that are centuries old. To take that work and share it with the world is a gift.

This book is the product of ongoing, collective healing and social justice. We partnered with Columbia University's Narrative Medicine Program for two years, attending workshops to study others' works and create our own. We shared our works with one another, and the room was filled with power and a sense of community, support and activism unlike any other. We are honored to share our community, ourselves, and our work with the world.

Shobana Powell

WORDS OF HOPE



As I Go

By: Fatima

Just for now

Start writing my
heart out

Born into myself

Risen from the tide
Shaken from the shackles

I collect compliment like coins
in a wish jar, for whatever I'm saving for

Forgive because I deserve it

Forgive to set myself free

Re-establish a belief, giggle a lot

I hand it back
I follow my heart,
will pass it on...

On Being Kind

By: Monica

It is the string in everything that ties together.

It is the thread of woven fabric that becomes a mosaic....

Art a kaleidoscope of emotions that unite for the greater good as it uncovers the spirit of humanity.

It is sharp as a knife cutting edge, through the layers that other wise may prove themselves impenetrable.

It cuts to the core and the essence the inner most being the soul.

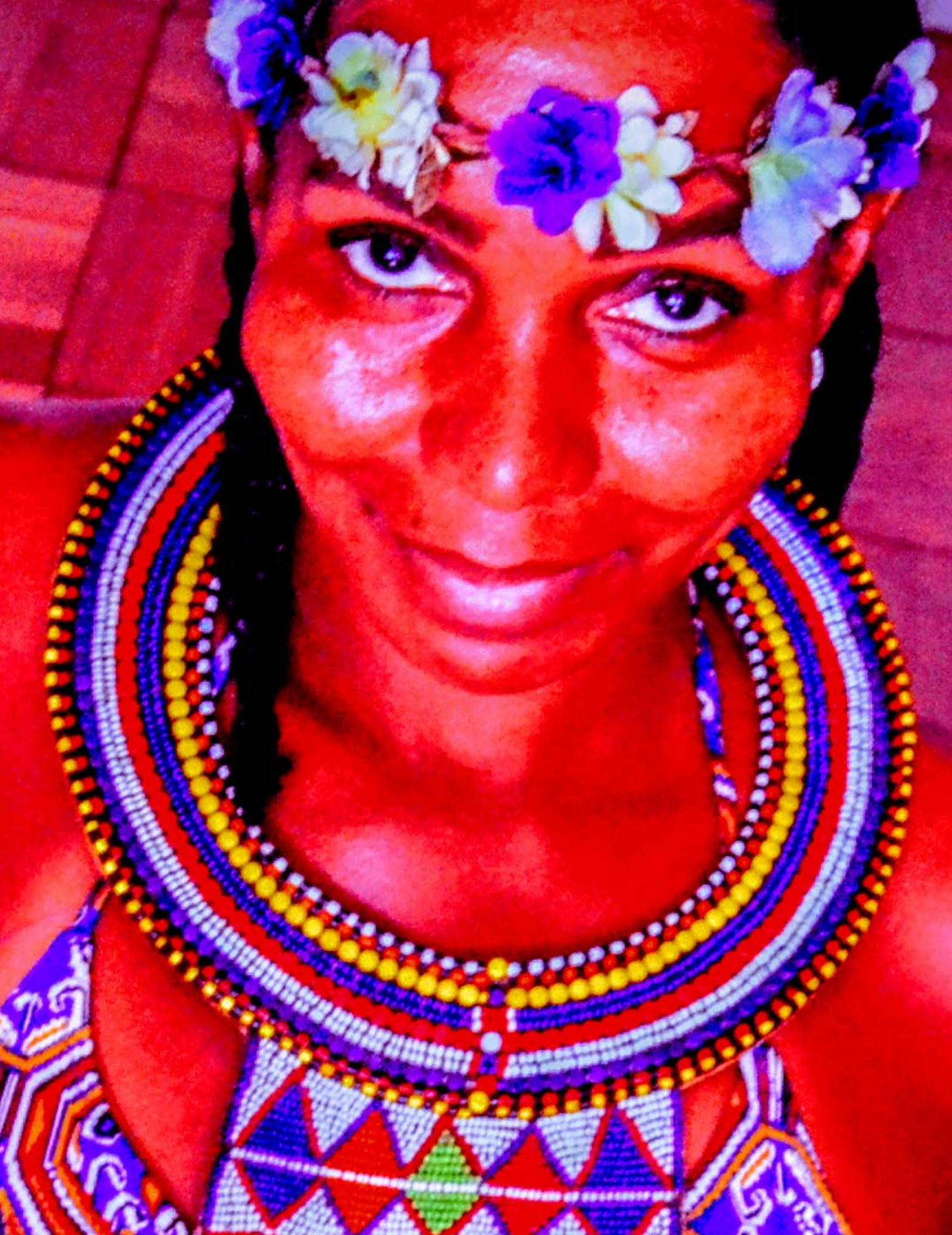
It is music... the symphony where words are obsolete and the highest frequency... the most dominant vibration will resonate and travel... beyond class, beyond race, beyond gender, beyond pain, beyond anger, beyond distrust, beyond sadness, beyond hopelessness, beyond judgement, beyond scarcity, beyond selfishness, beyond superiority, complex, infuriating... yet simple.

Kindness is the medicine from the heart of the healed healer to the broken soul. It's the spirit of humanity and will show its magic in a smile to the world.

Kindness is you, it is me.

It is everything we ought to be.

(On Being Kind)





Covid-19

By: Moreno M.

Hello Covid, how are you?

Why are you so angry and bitter with yourself?

You hurt so many families.

You made them cry.

You gave them pain, and made them turn to faith.

You came in like a storm but moving like a snail.

How much more pain we have to bear?

You destroy and separate families.

You have taken enough, just leave us alone to pick up the pieces.

We trust God and think it is time for you to leave us.

No more pains, no more cries.

Leave, leave, leave, leave!!!

Un diez de mayo más

By: Maria

Varios años han pasado, pero te sigo extrañando.
No volví a sentir una caricia tuya.
Tampoco estarás a mi regreso,
ni me esperarás con un beso.
Mucho menos escucharé tus bromas,
o esas palabras de amor que tenías para mí.
No sé siquiera cómo será regresar a casa,
y no encontrare sentadita en aquel sofá
donde me esperabas con tanto amor.
Tampoco me deleitaré con mi comida favorita,
hecha con tus manos,
ni escucharé aquellos regaños llenos de sabiduría
que en algún momento no entendía.
En mi corazón quedó un espacio vacío
que nada puede llenar.
Ni con el tiempo puedo olvidar de todo aquello
que solo tú me podías dar, mamá.
Te extraño tanto y recuerdo con nostalgia
aquellos hermosos 10 de mayo
cuando llegaba a casa entusiasmada,
llevando un pequeño regalo sencillo e insignificante,
pero que te llenaba de alegría.
No sabes la falta que me haces
y lo que daría por verte tan solo un instante.
Muchos pensarán que fui ingrata al dejarte
cuando más me necesitabas,
pero nadie sabe todo lo que tuvimos que pasar.
Aquellos que me juzgan no saben la verdad.

Tu y yo estábamos solas y siempre salimos adelante,
trabajando duro sin depender de nadie.
Mis hijos, que también son los tuyos,
siempre estuvimos unidos y queriéndonos
aún en la distancia.
Te pido perdón porque no supe ser buena hija.
Te pido perdón por no haberte amado como tú lo merecías.
Quiero decirte que jamás olvidaré
Aquel sueño donde tu despedías.
Nadie puede creerlo porque en ese entonces,
la gente loca me creía
Solo yo sé lo que vi y lo que tú me decías.
Perdóname, te pido, y solo te digo que
un día nos reencontraremos como tú decías
EN AQUEL VIAJE SIN REGRESO.
Mamá tú fuiste la mejor madre que Dios puso en mi camino.
Desde ahí entendí que el tipo de sangre no importa
cuando el amor es más grande que todo.
Gracias, MAMÁ por haber sido mucho más que eso.
Derrama tu bendición desde aquel bello lugar, que aquí todos te amamos.
Mami descansa tranquila que tus enseñanzas me han servido de mucho.





with a laughing
horus.
"You ready?"
"ou?" Brian said

everything. The
That little
ily's newest
ed walks with
of the leash."

The Gift That Cannot Be Returned

By: Renata

My heart holds many places
Sometimes I think there are no empty spaces
I care about things that matter
Some make me happy, others sadder

Unexpected events allow me to feel
Pain and joy teach me how to deal
With issues that I face on a daily basis
As well as people, no matter what the case is

It's important for me to make people see
Things in life that are so obvious to me
I used to think we were all perceptive
But that was before I learned how deceptive
Others were or had the potential to be
Opening my eyes became the key
To see things for what they really are
To decide whether I should stay close or far

I believe I have a gift to feel people's hearts
And to sense the energy of their inner parts
Sometimes I confuse this gift with feeling wise
But more often it comes with loneliness I must disguise

Life Goes On

By: Flore

As you're shattering my sense of security the world goes on

As you're trying to make the world you created for me
smaller than it already is, the world goes on

As you're reaching your highest level of evil and self-hatred,
the world goes on

My escape plan is in full force while the world goes on and
if I can live through this while surviving you, then I can
really make it anywhere and through anything. After all, this
is NY and the world, and my world will go on

And one day the two worlds will go on in harmony

(From a Victim's Perspective)





ME

By: Zoraya

"Para que vuelas mas alto
la vida no te quita cosas,
Te libera de ellas!!!!!!!"

"A veces ocurre que lo
que empieza como
una locura se
convierte en lo
Mejor de tu vida"

UNA MUJER CON METAS, OBJETIVOS Y PROPOSITO
NO TIENE PORQUE PERSEGUIR PERSONAS NI OPORTUNIDADES.
SU LUZ PROPIA HACE QUE LAS PERSONAS Y LAS OPORTUNIDADES
LA BUSQUEN A ELLA.

"JUST BECAUSE ONE CHAPTER MAY HAVE
COME TO A CLOSE.....
DOESN'T MEAN IT'S THE END.....
KEEP TURNING THE PAGES
YOUR STORY IS STILL UNFOLDING"

Season of Confusion

By: Joan

In this time of confusion and pain
We are all feeling the strain
Instead of focusing on what we have got
We're thinking about what we have not
Instead of lamenting about our finances
Why not think about ways that enhances
The lives of those less fortunate and blessed
Helping to relieve some of the burden and stress
By lending a helping hand, having an open mind
You might be surprised at what you find
So as you go about your busy day
Find some time, find a way
To ease the pain of another
Don't think of it as a bother
Consider it part of the plan
To help your fellow man





Shackles Broken

By: Sweet D.

We've come a long way
With a longer way to go
Like the javelin we must throw
Far and wide, no more shall we hide
This abuse on lives called
Domestic Violence
Lives lost will not be in vain
Standing hand in hand, our voices
thunderous will reign
Speaking throughout the land, we shall
win this race on
Human trafficking, gender based
Through Education interconnectedness
we stand tall
With fervency and strength, we will
not fall
Into the hands of a system filled with
terrorism and hate
Grateful for time, we are not too late
We didn't take the bait of that voice
so irate
The chokehold has been loose
Children deserve a life free from abuse
A time to be free from the monarchy of DV
Join hearts as we hear a voice from the past
Free at last free at last Thank GOD ALMIGHTY
we are Free at Last!

El virus incierto

By: Leticia

Fue una mañanita fría de marzo,
unos cuantos días antes de empezar la primavera.
Los noticieros en todos lados hablaban sobre un virus,
una pandemia que no entendía.
Algo incierto y desconocido y con mucha incertidumbre me
sorprendió un sobresalto, con un latido fuerte al corazón.

No entendía que estaba pasando en el mundo
Pero de repente me vino el recuerdo a la mente.
Mi hija, que aún dormía, y ya pasaban de las 11 de la mañana.

¡Con un impulso que no me explicaba, un algo que no supe qué!
Me decía "¿A qué hora desayunará Ana? Ya es tarde."

De repente me dio un vuelco el corazón, me brincó un sobresalto
y tan rápido como pude abrí la puerta de su habitación.
Ahí estaba, temblando de frío y ardiendo en fiebre.

Ella débilmente abrió sus ojitos y entre dientes me miro y
dijo "Mommy me duele mi cabeza."
Era el Covid-19 que se avía apoderado de mi niña.

Algo sarcástico—yo bromeaba diciéndole que era el parvovirus
todo el tiempo en tono de broma.
Broma—que broma.

Ahora no era broma
Era un huésped en el cuerpo de mi hija y no lo sabía

Yo con todo el dolor de mi corazón—sin saberlo—sin entenderlo.
Sin creerlo.
Aún bromeaba con un virus que se manifestó hasta la China.
Y hoy aquí atreves de kilómetros y kilómetros de distancia estaba aquí.
Aquí y aún no lo creía.

No lo podía creer, porque no me lo explicaba,
Yo las cuidaba tanto, no las sacaba, y si salían iban cubiertas de cabo a rabo.
Cubre bocas, guantes, desinfectantes por todos lados.
¡No era posible que eso estuviera aquí!

Como era posible, algo que no se ve
Algo tan pequeñito, algo tan increíble
Pero que mataba gente
¿Sería eso lo que tenía tirada en cama a mi pequeña princesa?
Eso me preguntaba
Incrédula, no podía caber en mi mente.

Después de varios días de altas fiebres y sin poder levantarse de la cama
aún me seguía preguntando si sería eso, y,
¿cómo llegaría aquí?

***Este poema lo hice por mi hija Ana y por como me sentía por
no haberla cuidado. Fue una culpabilidad por no poder protegerla.***





The Voice

By: Sandra

Alone not forgotten and never lonely

Silence, listening to the Voice of God my one & only

Keeping my mind sane in the mist of Trauma & Pain

Until we all freely BREATHE again

TRANSLATIONS

Another 10th of May

By: Maria

Several years have passed, but I still miss you.
I never felt a caress from you again.
You won't be there upon my return,
nor will you be waiting for me with a kiss.
Much less will I listen to your jokes,
or those words of love that you had for me.
I don't even know what it will be like to come home
and not find you sitting on that sofa
where you waited for me with so much love.
Nor will I delight in my favorite food made with your hands,
or listen to those scoldings full of wisdom
that at one point I failed to understand.
In my heart there is an empty space
that nothing can fill.
Not even with time will I forget about everything
That only you could you give me, mom.
I miss you so much and remember with nostalgia
those beautiful 10ths of May
when I would come home excited
bringing a simple little gift,
insignificant, but that filled you with joy.
You don't know how much I miss you
and what I would give to see you for just a moment.
Many will think that I was ungrateful for leaving you
when you needed me the most.
But nobody knows everything we had to go through.
Those who judge me do not know the truth.

You and I were alone and yet we always made it,
working hard, without relying on anyone.
My children, who are also yours,
we were always united and loving each other
even in the distance.
I apologize because I did not know how to be a good daughter,
I apologize for not having loved you like you deserved.
I want to tell you that I will never forget
That dream where you said goodbye
No one can believe it because back then
People thought I was crazy
Only I know what I saw and what you told me
Forgive me, I ask of you, and I only tell you that
One day we meet again, like you said
ON THAT TRIP WITHOUT RETURN.
Mom, you were the best mother that God put in my way.

The Uncertain Virus

By: Leticia

It was a cold morning in March,
a few days before the start of spring.
The news everywhere was talking about a virus,
a pandemic I did not understand.
Something uncertain and unknown
and with much uncertainty it took me by surprise
with a startle, with a strong pound in my heart.

I did not understand what was happening in the world
But suddenly the memory came to mind. My daughter who was
still sleeping and it was already past 11 in the morning.

Like an impulse that I could not explain, something that I did not know what it
was!
It was telling me "When will Ana have breakfast? It's already late."

Suddenly my heart skipped a beat, I jumped
and as fast as I could I opened the door of her room.
There she was, shivering cold and burning with fever.

She weakly opened her eyes and through her teeth, she looked
at me and said "Mommy my head hurts."
It was Covid-19 that was taking over my girl.

Somewhat sarcastic—I joked that it was the
Parvovirus, all the time jokingly.
Joke—what a joke.

Now it was no joke
It was a guest in my daughter's body and I didn't know it.

Me, with all the pain in my heart—without knowing it—
without understanding it, without believing it.
I was still joking about a virus that had manifested in China.
And here today, across miles and miles away, it was here.
Here, and still could not believe it.

I could not believe it, because because I could not explain it.
I took such care of them, I never took them out, and if they
went out they were covered from head to toe.
Masks, gloves, disinfectants everywhere.
It was not possible that this was here!

How was it possible, something that cannot be seen
Something so tiny, something so incredible
But that killed people.
Would that be what had my little princess lying in bed?
That I was wondering
Incredulous, it couldn't fit my mind.

After several days of high fevers and without being able to get out of bed
I still kept wondering if it was that
and, how did it get here?

***I made this poem for my daughter Ana and about how I felt about not having cared
for her. I felt guilt for not being able to protect her.***



**Sanctuary
for Families**

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