

mo Santiago

### **dead girl that looks like me**

Somewhere out there, a young woman with brown curls is lying in a ditch. It has been three days since anyone has noticed this body. She was wearing a ponytail when she was taken. A smile before she turned around. A forest coat and brown boots, she might've had a similar sounding name. Something about the vowels.

On a Tuesday she is discovered and she is taped and pardoned from the freeway. She no longer lingers in limbo, she may just gawk at her own decay. Watches a man with hands very similar to the last turn her over and move her. She does not look at him, she did not look at the last one. She didn't want to know.

When they put her in a bag face up, more courtesy than he had, she is grateful to feel like her eyes are closed. She is grateful to have been found.

When they cannot contact her family because he pulled out all of her teeth, stole away her fingerprints, devoured her of identity she learns the word lost. When she is sitting in a metal box for six weeks with no reprieve, they bury her in the local cemetery and they bury her "Unnamed White Female, November 1980"

This is how they make us forgotten, they are thorough in their work and they are faithful to their cause. This is how they take our names. This is how they take our lives. This is how they take us out        it's a group effort.

## **red balloons for my bitches covered in blood**

let's throw a party, in red, stain the walls with our  
insides and pretend it's pretty. You're good at doing  
it anyway- pretending ugly things are pretty.  
Pretending the reality of them does not exist.  
Brushing them under pretty rugs in pretty boxes,  
coffins on the hillside.

why do you get so uncomfortable? When i talk  
about it like that? When I try to show you the truth?  
Why do you get so uncomfortable when someone  
says the word rape? You know it's natural for a body  
to convulse when you see another one in rot but not  
while she is still alive and trying to ask you for help.

When a girl tells you she's scared, you should listen.  
When a girl tells you she was raped, you will listen.  
When a dead girl is calling your name you should  
listen. Take your taut skin and moisturize, there is  
no room for uncomfortability in this world. Not when  
we are dying, not when they are taking us and  
burying us underneath court cases and gaslighting  
us and throwing us in the dirt.

You see women don't just die, they get murdered.  
The bodies of us are being taken. They are picking  
us off one by one, they are punishing us for being  
magical, for being alive, for being women. We need  
your help, we need your ears first. Are you listening?

Can you hear me? Can you hear me? I don't want to  
scream in a room alone, please don't let me die in  
this room alone. Someone sing my name and  
breathe life into my mouth, someone call my name,  
someone come looking for me. Someone else say it  
first for once, tell them, look them in the eyes.

I got to live, I am alive but so many other beautiful  
people did not. So many of them are buried in trash

cans. Under subways. Left in the side of the road, in a ditch, in a pool of mud, in a pool of their own blood. Someone took their clothes, their eyes, their first times, their names- someone took their lives.

so let's throw a party, in red, pretty and dead. I wanna blow up red balloons for my bitches covered in blood, saturated in their own skin and mud. little girls with lost names. you ever seen a body on the side of the road? you ever seen a body beg not to be seen? you ever seen a dead girl beg for some peace and quiet, for a grave ?

Give her a grave. With her name on it. Put her fucking name on it.



mo Santiago and is a writer and artist by way of nature and study of craft. She is currently concentrating on poetry at Columbia College Chicago and dabbling in the other worlds of creative writing. Her writing centers on the conversations around sexual assault, the body, sex and intimacy. As a self-studied photographer, her heart and focus are portraiture and nature. She loves embalming people in time, living in their naturalness; she appreciates accidental blurs and dig smallness.

She's homegrown right here in the city of Chicago and in her free time drinks coffee and travel as often as financially possible.