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## I Ache in Portugese

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# I ACHÉ IN PORTUGUESE

*Cristal Cardoso Sao Mateus*

I find it funny that tears are salt water. It makes me wonder if the sea is made of sorrows.

Driving down the bridge that connects the island to the mainland, middle of winter and eighty-five degrees out. Thirty Celsius but Americans insist on being different. They are like the punk kid of the planet.

Salt water.

Airport buzz. The smell of cheap coffee and diner grease and newspapers and tears. I like to look at people and imagine where they are going. I am sure that even if they tried, they wouldn't know about me. I am going away.

Saudade.

Saudade is a word in the Portuguese language with no direct translation to English. It refers to the feeling you experience when you long for someone or some place.

I can only ache in Portuguese.

"You will be OK, Cristal."

Sunflowers.

The innocence of my cousin in thinking that I could take flowers with me. I took them and after she left, I gave them to random people at the airport. Someone had to make a good day out of this. People would kill for this and yet I feel like a blind guy in a gunfight. We say that in my culture.

Crossfire.

God bless you and God walk you through this journey.

*Thank you grandma, thank you pa. I will be back soon. I will be a journalist, then I will be back and we can all be together again.*

Cross signal.

"Take this with you."

We say God must have been Brazilian. He must have been Brazilian and then he left, just like me. God doesn't give snakes any wings, we say. Funny, the things we say. Legend claims that, maybe a century ago, one of my relatives was eaten by Indians.

Anthropophagy. Literally.

My family stares and I stare. The screen says "last call," but I don't want to go. I could turn around now and forget all of this nonsense. I could go home and take a nap. But I won't because I need to see this through.

"If it doesn't work out, don't you be ashamed of coming back."

Underestimated.

*Ma'am would you like these sunflowers? I can't take them along.*

Salt water. Saudade.

I remember the exact moment in which I switched to English. I was drunk for the first time and my thoughts got scrambled, then it was all in English inside my head. Shoes house car vodka I lost my shoes. *Why am I thinking in English? Vodka cup mirror ugh you look like shit I can't think and I can't feel my teeth and sleep sounds good. Toilet bowl spins goodnight.*

I had eaten sushi that day.

I like aisle seats because I can get up to pee without waking up my fellow travelers. I am thinking it doesn't matter now because the crying is probably bothering everyone, anyway. Every flight needs a crying baby. My stomach hurts, but I eat anyway because I know there won't be food again for hours. I chow down on *pollo con papas* because most Americans think that Brazilians speak Spanish. We. Do. Not.

*No se habla.*

Eyes open and I can see myself gaining distance from my home. Eyes closed and I can see my family going home and drying up their tears. I can see them gathering around the table and drinking coffee and talking about what a wonderful opportunity this is. I can see my mother crying herself to sleep. So I eat and eat and take sleeping pills. Eventually I fall into a medication-induced sleep, exhausted from all the feeling.

(Home)land (security).

Thank you for flying with us.

Fill this out. Cristal. Fingerprints please. What is the purpose of your trip? Get into the system. Border control. *Buenos dias, Crystal.* I am a student going to the Western Michigan University *but as I look at you officer, I'm going to be real and say that I'm almost certain this was a bad idea* I am super excited terrified It will be a great experience *I don't know what I was thinking mr. officer.* Thank you, have a good day, Krystal.

Chrystal.

Welcome.

Lock your doors like every proper Brazilian does and put your valuables in the safe and call Mark and Cassie if anything happens. First night alone and I could certainly use a glass or twenty of wine as the night progresses silently in my new apartment. The stars are different in this hemisphere and I am different in this hemisphere.

Salt water.

My place admittedly has been a mess since day one. I wash all clothes on the same load and eat grilled cheese for every meal. I used dish soap to do my laundry for weeks before I realized it wasn't for clothes and I do the dishes while singing Frank Sinatra and I honestly just don't have a clue because Rosa did all this for me back at home, while I sat on the counter and discussed the soap operas with her.

Spoiled fucking brat.

Saudade.

If I eat pizza again for dinner, I am bound to lose my shit.

Being alone is hard because I don't really know how to do it. I get emotionally unstable every now and always and talk to myself and stuffed animals until my boyfriend comes to save me. I don't know why he hasn't dumped me yet. I would have. He is a saint because I am no easy job.

Love.

I am lucky because I have my real family and my host family. They love me and protect me and believe in me enough to pay for the WMU tuition. They tell me I am the future of journalism and I even believe them sometimes. I am lucky because I have Nolan M to love me and kill cockroaches whenever I have any. He cooks me meals that aren't from a box and cares that I have no winter clothes and holds my eyes when salt water tries to carry them away. He is the feeling of comfort and the smell of cigarettes and pine trees.

He is sanity.

I am lucky to sit at Waldo Library and brainstorm all of it and go home to a bed and eat pizza and do it all over again tomorrow.

My mom tells me to eat fruit and drink lots of water and that she wants Nolan to come visit. My dad tells me he wants to have a talk with Nolan and falls into laughter because we both know he isn't that kind of dad.

# HALLOWEEN

*Drew Heuermann*

My mother and father recently got divorced and I fear for my sister and her sanity. I am lucky because I get to be away and forget all about the broken glass inside my chest.

In case of emergency break the glass.

I take English with all the American kids and it is exciting because I don't feel like an underdog. I need perfect English if I want to be a journalist or I can just change my major.

Eloquence.

*You are literally a piece of shit.*

Now it only hurts when I laugh. Whoever said that was a genius. I laugh all the time.

If you fall and no one else is around to listen, does it still make a sound?

I love going to class and drinking coffee at Sprau tower every morning.

I might not love it as much when the ground is coated in snow and I am coated in despair, but I love it now. Coming home is the hardest part. Sometimes I feel like I go days without human interaction. School study clean the house sleep school study.

I am fine most of the time, but sometimes I wake up in sweat not knowing where I am. I pinch myself to make sure I still exist.

I ache in Portuguese through the

snowfall

exams

money problems

lies

karma

nightmares

self-doubt.

*Saudade.*

My brother's face looked odd that night  
as if it were part of the broadcast that shone from the T.V.  
as it illuminated his slumbering form.  
Light gray, almost white around his lips and along his jaw and cheekbone.

He was still wearing the garments of a Samurai on his twisted body.  
I wore the loose fabrics of a ninja, per his request.  
"A nice one, though."

I saw an old soccer ball in the corner  
that he had taken back out.  
It had been years since it had tasted our touch.

And then that was our last night really  
before I headed out to the coast.

I put an old Power Rangers blanket on him  
and then slept next to him on the floor  
hoping that his hand might drop down  
and touch my face during the night.