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## When My Name Was Cristal

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## **When My Name Was Cristal**


*Cristal Cardoso Sao Mateus*

There is something liberating about  
those dark cold nights when  
I'm the last person on campus —  
the winter wind sticks to my skin like thick perfume,  
each door of each building gets successively locked.  
Nowhere to hide.

I walk by every bright blue light from the emergency phones,  
my native language burning in the back of my throat  
(like a secret that only belongs to me).

Can they know?  
How it feels when I hear myself  
speaking and  
something snaps inside of me?  
Surprise! I am halfway  
across the world  
    alone  
and speaking,  
yelling  
at every bright blue light  
on this empty campus.

On those cold nights,  
when I can see my breath  
and the only sound is from my boots  
crushing rock salt,  
I think of simpler times:  
napping on the granite floors,  
my summer white dress stained with tomatoes,  
the dizzying smell of cilantro  
and salt and seaweed.



Simpler times when  
my name still sounded like it should —  
like an uninterested wave conquering a patch of sand.

Now as I hug the winter winds,  
I fear that my anonymity  
across this empty campus  
might swallow me whole,  
and I will never be Cristal again.