

61 INCHES & A THOUSAND TRILLION TONS

(A NIGHTMARISH MARITIME LULLABY FOR
PLAZA PERIMETER PEOPLE)

A Play in One Act

by

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61 Inches & A Thousand Trillion Tons
(a nightmarish maritime lullaby for plaza perimeter people)

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players

POET: From New York City; traveling Europe; in Málaga, Spain.
COVADONGA: From Málaga; traveling US; in New York City.
SANTIAGO: From Málaga; traveling Europe; in Berlin.
MADRE: Covadonga's mother and Poet's hostel host; in Málaga.

setting/scene

Primarily Málaga, Spain, present, as Poet writes away in a private hostel bedroom. It is Covadonga's childhood room, rented out by her mother.

The vignettes explore time and space and should be reminiscent of lucid dreams: vibrant, whimsical, creative, drastic, and juxtaposing in color, tonal shifts, lighting, and sound choices.

run time

one act; ~30 min.

ACT I
Scene 1

SETTING: Covadonga's childhood bedroom, pink and warm. This space can act as a canvas becoming the other recalled locations - including a sleek reptile house, afternoon plaza, Paris and Mumbai in entirely different eras, soaked in romance - or, stage can be split into multiple settings.

AT RISE: POET, sleeping restlessly. They toss and turn before sitting up quickly.

Intro.
Recordando Covadonga y Santiago, Dos Teenagers en Málaga

POET

I was startled awake by the ghost of
an alternative life that never happened,
by a lover starved and neglected
before even seeing flesh or sun,
set in a pink second-story bedroom
across Spain's chin, beside a single bulb brushed
with red paisley cloth,
blushing eternal adolescence
like indie cinema,
space deserted in
young lust and uncharted dusk,

POET & COVADONGA

like my then perkier, plumper cheeks at 3 a.m.

POET

in an old school stairwell otherwise independent,
alone that time we crashed,
accidentally

POET, COVADONGA, & SANTIAGO

colliding

POET

like salty warm waves upon the tile floor.

MADRE

Covadonga journeyed far for Universidad,

POET

her madre muses over Clásico instant coffee,

MADRE

bored pale by the coastal town

POET

that glows vibrant and romantic in my

POET, COVADONGA, & SANTIAGO

traveling

POET

eyes. The mosaic labyrinths I find exciting
apparently tire when you learn every route, and at dead ends,
Covadonga, in her plaid skirt and mauve lipstick, kept
re-meeting her rosy, irresistible saints.
Like maybe

COVADONGA

handsome Santiago...

POET

his photograph stills still framed
on her childhood shelf,
next to a glass bowl of

MADRE

complimentary apples!

POET

and a polite pomegranate bouquet.

ALL

We all recall

POET

these brief instants at 3 a.m.,
before dawn hands us places to see and to be.
Backpacks by strange beds but ceilings of stars
to count in Spanglish or Human
'till pulled back asleep...

MADRE & COVADONGA

returning home,

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

fading to black,

COVADONGA

recordando lucid dreams
cast by the sea.

I.

61 Inches and A Thousand Trillion Tons (To Take Care Of)

POET

I snoozed through eight alarms
and entered the afternoon confused,
emotionally hungover,
empty stomach, hair a mess,
and bleeding from who knows where.
Nothing out of the ordinary.
Nothing uncommon there.

I want to blame myself, but I can't
for being human.
For slacking in my control of a body

I feed, walk, and talk to responsibly
(all consistently more or less than I should).

Perhaps this is why the gods only gave me
61 inches and 100 pounds
to watch over in a mediocre way.
Perhaps I'll create or acquire more
to take real better care of someday.

Perhaps we should grow to love our masses,
through all their quirks and spills,
errors and wounds, and weight.
For simply existing as specks on Earth:
1,000 trillion tons
in fucking infinite space.

Only 1,000 trillion tons
to take the best care of now.

II.

No Smoking in the Berlin Reptile House!

SANTIAGO

Once in Berlin, months or maybe lives ago,

POET & SANTIAGO

I met a stranger in a candlelit concave nook of a black tile bar.

POET

They felt relatively familiar and wore a funky thrifted button-up with birds, so of course I drunkenly proposed we see the zoo the following day. Sure enough, he called early as a robin next dawn, and we prolonged our lucid song

SANTIAGO

with tiny, pocketable bottles of corner store champagne,

POET

hot coffees for a buzz, and a dented pack of Marlboros

POET & SANTIAGO

to split.

POET

A rare, sunny Sunday,

POET

everything sparkled

SANTIAGO

and swam

POET

in my always watery eyes,

SANTIAGO

in your curiously watery eyes

POET

as we sipped and smoked our way past the cages,

SANTIAGO

lions and tigers and bears,

POET

Oh god. What a life I've lived so far. What a route I've journeyed. What a firecracker I used to be - explosive amber snaked over dry lawns, singeing vegetation with manic chemistry.

Restlessness in a creative spirit is poison. So is creativity in a restless one, and the danger I posed to society and myself I acknowledge publicly here. Privately, I fucking miss it. I wish I could justify utter carelessness with youth, narcissism with self-discovery, volatility with adventure, recklessness with you.

(SANTIAGO points to himself and raises an eyebrow questioningly. POET shakes their head no, no, not you.)

POET, CON'T.

When I don't miss these sentiments, I'm letting them swallow me still.

POET & SANTIAGO

Once while in the Berlin reptile house, months or maybe lives ago

when we kissed against the glass,

POET

I swore I'd

SANTIAGO

Stay in touch?

POET

But I've never texted back. Never reply. I leave strangers and lovers on read, red, red, awake at 3 a.m., keeping plastic between us and film over my eyes, feeling slick and darted as a split toxic tongue. Rabid, ablaze, in a buzzing haze, hungry for smooth skin and scales. A nocturnal insomniac who refused to switch off the screen until the grand climax of the show, delusional with a claim that players and audiences alike take blessing from my guessing game.

God. Does any of this surprise you? (I ignored every No Smoking sign and felt serene surrounded by snakes.)

III.

The Scariest Country, Hands Up

COVADONGA

"You travel alone?"

POET

"As a woman? To India, South America, the Middle East?"

POET & COVADONGA

"Wow. How goddamn brave."

POET

The truth is:

I've experienced far more plaguing, paralyzing trauma on my university campus, in the shadowy valleys between flickering pools, in the houses externally rich and magnificent but empty within save for buckets of beer, exactly like the wealthy boys who live inside, causing abusing in the same chambers their fathers' fathers did.

The horror is:

I've experienced far more plaguing, paralyzing fear
in my local mall, Synagogue, and cousins' public schools
while making memories, enjoying movies or music,
all in the scariest country than anywhere else in the world.

COVADONGA

Because in many places, the men stare.

POET

In Dublin, they hollered. In Barcelona, they whistle along the streets.

POET

But over there

COVADONGA

But here

POET & COVADONGA

in the United States of America,
they attack.

POET

Explorers I meet from every continent and country,
say no, they haven't been. Their parents draw that line.

MADRE

It's a bad place to see and be.

POET

Because the boys and men with their metal and muscle arms, angry minds and twisted
beliefs,
have plagued the scariest country with with paralyzing trauma and fear. So:

POET & COVADONGA

What to do?
Where to go?
Where to go?

IV.

I Heart – cross out – Hate NY!
(a.k.a. The Inevitable) (a.k.a. Be practical, Nora.)

SANTIAGO

“I hate America,”

POET

spit a hostel concierge years ago, a boy with eighteen rounds of life experience, home base elsewhere, a fresh face and a kind, giving heart. I can tell because I’m sensitive and immediately defensive to anything else. “Because Trump?” I guess, planning to promise my mutual contempt.

SANTIAGO

“Because capitalism,”

POET

he replied.

SANTIAGO

“It’s all money, narcissism, greed.”

POET

Awkward and unprepared for the exchange, I paused. “Huh. Somehow I never really think about that, actually,” I said, then thought: Why do I never think about that? When and where did I become so obsessed with this

POET & COVADONGA

elusive idea of success of which I will never achieve, with my stupid, stubborn passion for *Words* and aim to craft them into a Career?

POET

How can I select this route so plainly offensive to

POET, MADRE, & COVADONGA

my parents and their parents’ parents,

POET

from Poland, Slovakia, Ireland,

SANTIAGO

Germany and

SANTIAGO & COVADONGA

Malaga, Spain,

POET, COVADONGA, & SANTIAGO

who all worked so fucking hard in their cities and towns, on their factories and farms,

POET

just to provide here and now in this lifetime in rural PA?

POET, COVADONGA, & SANTIAGO

Will I make less than them? Of course. Will I earn or offer more?

(ALL three shrug, uncertain.)

POET

My childhood house on the hill, my second-story light pink bedroom, is the objectively nicest place I'll call home. When I have a daughter, I'll have to stress stringiness, say:

POET & MADRE

"No, you cannot travel abroad or go study the arts. Work in accounting or marry rich."

POET

"Be practical, Nora. Be safe." That's humiliating, a guilty shame. So what can I do? Release my greedy green fever dreams and plot my narrative here,

MADRE

teaching on the coast, raising children around plants and peace?

POET

They'd probably

POET & MADRE

hate it,

POET

And, bored sick, relocate

ALL

across the ocean, to New York City

POET & COVADONGA

to write indulgent, self-obsessed poetry.

V.

Fuck-up this time around...?

COVADONGA

I still visit the places we used to call ours
and sit at the tables we used to claim,
convince myself it's exposure therapy
as if your presence now could cause any less pain.

SANTIAGO

I lean upon balconies at rainy dusks
with tea and a quilt; are you doing the same?
Watching the moon slowly pursue the sun
in nature's dark chase, cold eternal game.

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

You'll never catch the sun, moon. Play on.

COVADONGA

All these orbits, patterns, and arcs...
Destructive love is not just-born.
Stars have been crossing for centuries, love.

SANTIAGO

Millennia ago I know mine met you.

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

Crashing like comets, burning like lava,
two disastrous artists addicted to disarray,
desperate for action, craving inspiration,
existing with craters where hearts were supposed to be.

COVADONGA

Bet in the 20s we partied up Paris,
années folles, those crazy years,

SANTIAGO

cigars and feathers, drops of pearls, oil
paintings in gold frames under glass chandeliers.
And lives before that, intertwined in Mumbai,
we lapped up our wet bodies with lasting red clay,

COVADONGA

erotically working through the Kama Sutra.
Jasmine and palm leaves; you're nirvana, babe.

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

Do you think we made it in another creation?

COVADONGA

God, not knowing is strange.

SANTIAGO

Salt lingers on my tongue.

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

I fucking miss it. I get carried away.

COVADONGA

But then deeply I inhale - not smoke, pure air,
somehow cleaner in this new land I call home,
where I practice yoga, veganism, and crafts.
It's exciting.

SANTIAGO

It's distracting

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

for my hands, and my skin *goddamn glows*.

COVADONGA

I run further than I could beside you.

SANTIAGO

I write myself stupid poems and prose.

COVADONGA

I wish my plants goodnight when difficulty feels like danger,
when my internal stirrings suggest a storm.
They are my patron saints, named Raphael and Frances;
they bless healing and the sea.

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

Medication harbors my reckless volatility, which I associate with you,
so the poison beats in only semi-polluted waves.

COVADONGA

Are you aware it still hurts?

SANTIAGO

Or were you never of nothing at all?

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

Do you think we made it in another narrative?
I curse myself for still asking,
beg the bright movie dreams to dull.

SANTIAGO

Maybe as I'll age, these heavy questions
will plummet in one bottle to the ocean ground,

COVADONGA

but I can't help sinking and thinking
from a pitch-black foreign balcony:

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

did we fuck up this time around?

VI.

ode to plaza perimeter people

MADRE

how quaint it is

POET

to play not a participant but a spectator in a
bustling, social plaza.
the high-pitched shrieks temper to laughter,
carried away on the wings of pigeons the performers shoo
but we watchers beckon with baked bread,
relaxed, unbothered.
mistaken for lonely, exhausted, sunk into existential broodiness,
but rather floating, quite content.

SANTIAGO

how kind it is

POET

to sense calm kin among my fellow observers,
compelled to wish them farewell when I stand and
make our first and only
word shared “good day”
before continuing my stroll.

COVADONGA

how cogent

POET

to document these memories later,
to avoid rustling the present and disturbing the magic
and writing instead after hours pass,
nestled in the back corner with a cappuccino in a
bustling, social cafe,
as I’m doing right now.

how *quiet*,
how cogent, how quaint, and kind
in my personal private plaza,
in the company of steaming coffee and spectacular humans,
neither of which I’m expected to, you know,
talk to.

VII.

(scribbled on spare napkins; *observations*)

COVADONGA

New York City subways are like thin tin microwaves.
And every time the rusty windows admit another flannel-clad artist in secret misery,
I kind of want to melt him under my tongue.
The breeze is warm; the air is cool
in Chelsea this Monday afternoon.
Two weeks from the first of fall.
October 8th; Columbus Day.

(ALL shake their heads, roll their eyes.)

COVADONGA, CON'T.

I gaze out over from the High Line. It's high time,
or so the hisses pester me, to secure real actions and plans.
But what is real when my heart's happy?
What must be full when nothing feels empty?
My eyes are so gently pleased,
tickled pink by brick and blue.
My blood beats for the children with sketch pads
and high school teenagers with dreams.

SANTIAGO

(Quietly, off-handedly, in an "I'll say it one more time" sort of manner)

New York is unnecessarily capitalist,

SANTIAGO & POET

sneering at the hopeful, preying on the weak.

POET

But I have lived there for eight years.

COVADONGA

I am excited to play a part.

I am proud to have hiked the last year of my life,
to return to the same spot in an entirely different place.
How universal; healing, discovery, decision of Self,

assembly, reconstruction. Loss is not surrender,
but rather release of personally-imposed traps and restraints.
Wind sweeps away anxieties. Attachments leave town.
All moves along, and under, and through.

Culture is:

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

diners at sunrise,

COVADONGA & POET

modern art and free museums,

ALL

ideas and inspirations, letters to drifting loved ones,
scribbled on spare napkins then crumpled
and thrown out

POET & SANTIAGO

at the corner store,

POET & MADRE

your favorite sweater, pair of loafers or socks,
or both as a set, and how they're worn around the house,

ALL

a story adored by an entire planet

POET

all a thousand trillion tons of it
or maybe just a couple hundred pounds,
which seems enough despite the book's missing pages,
bleary with tears or coffee stains, or torn and traded
or simply lost,

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

long drives to far away,

COVADONGA & MADRE

phone calls to back home,

ALL

cities.

COVADONGA

and Cities are:

COVADONGA & POET

Teachers.

POET & SANTIAGO

Berlin

SANTIAGO

taught me independence, individuality, retaliation, exploration.

POET

Edinburgh
specialized in

POET & MADRE

humility, family, and tranquility.

POET

Jaipur
my first and forever class, a memory now – led units in spirituality, discipline, and
compassion. Empathy and understanding.

POET & COVADONGA

New York

boasts a long list of courses in art, drive, ambition, possibility, so many I have yet to take.

COVADONGA

And passion is:

Making love to a stranger you meet within yourself,
who bristles as distant at first,
alluring and unattained,
building all the more bursting, crackling thrill.

How nice it is to breathe,
to ebb and flow, ripple and relax,
and find peace with
precisely who I am;
to finally like that person,
to toast my internal infrastructure with the care I once only radiated
and learn that intimacy is infinite; no set amount to split.
What a treasure, a sight to behold,
the good on the horizon.
I'm grateful I chose to stay on earth,
to tighten my grip on the balcony rail and thank the moon,
let it swallow me whole.

Here is what I write to myself, for the year ahead:
Do what you love. Grant every person patience
and space to speak.
Let life happen, foster relationships, embrace the present, uncertain, terrifying and wide
open experience of being young, and create always.

New York City, babe, here I am.
Here now I stand with my empty hands.
No compulsion to crash or collide or chase.
Not anymore.

VIII.
hostel lost & found / numerology

POET

wool jumpers, scarves, socks
a pair of salmon-colored capris, one cotton daisy dress
bent but half-full boxes of pasta and rolling paper
3-milliliter vials of soap and shampoo, sometimes combined
maps, brochures
a spare museum pass on a lucky streak
or an already-started café punch card three away from
a free small black coffee!

extra weight deserted, discarded, among airport bathroom trash (like myself)

or preferably exchanged in hostel lobbies, after returning the key, card, fob thingamabob
between perpetually jetlagged explorers together awaiting yet another daybreak shuttle
bus

a peanut butter granola bar for two leftover eggs?

can't take 'em on a plane, but still plenty of energy to offer, prior to their expiration date.
an omelette, even - a whole meal, baby!

thank you

to the intentionally lost and traded

for keeping us clean, fed, and taken care of

for detaching yourselves in pursuit of the vaster journey purpose and aim

the infinite circle of narratives and plots

the grand gritty kingdom of saints

I'm sorry,

feeling bittersweet and nostalgic,

towards the accidentally misplaced

names and WhatsApp contacts bursting with potential

maybe or apparently not rooted in fate

and my favorite pair of Texas, forgotten, hopefully now strapped to another set of loving
feet

still trekking on, aware of their prints charting

new paths around New Delhi; they don't need me.

also abandoned, though with no necessary apology:

the trauma

the fears

the negativity

heartbreak

self-absorption

and expectations

all stamped into the Dublin streets or tossed overboard from a ferry off Athens

vomited figuratively into a journal, then consequently literally inside a cramped, chipped
tile water closet, empty and alone

seasick with the movement; grateful for the journey.

at first, the worse my back aches, the less my heart does

the harder my feet pound, the lighter my head lifts

every pound shed is compulsion to skip,

motivation to walk onwards through the maze.
until Lost recedes, and Found's released
and I begin lusting, once again, for a pack filled to its brim, bulging proudly
with exciting new delights to split and share,
creating space for the cosmic beckonings in my chest,
whispers between my ears,
rustlings to my hair.

my numerology, my destiny number, is eight, since you asked.
I'm a Gemini sun, Capricorn moon, and while I
can't easily articulate exactly what that means,
I guess I seek balance and fulfillment
strolling secondhand stores for secondhand stories
collected like alternative records and late-night foreign film scenes.
And I know we connect signs and spirits significantly
to determine precisely where we're supposed to see and be.

Outro.

Maestro's Last Symphony (Play on, my Lady)

POET

Maestro, play to me
the aroma of cigarettes frying and street treats boiling,
the silky, glossy touch

POET & COVADONGA

of a freshly printed boarding pass

POET & SANTIAGO

or a concert ticket,

POET & MADRE

the breeze of calming palm trees harmonizing waves upon soft shore.

POET

Play to me
the challenges and triumphs,
the highs and lows, and every moment I'll recall, I'll fucking miss, in eight or infinite
years.

the summers and winters, springs and falls, all arcs and plummet, air and earth in
the end,
the grand finale,
the outro,
the encore song.

Maestro, play to me also

The rests between the beats.

The tranquil, ultimately appreciated silences observed in private plazas, from balconies
while it rains or pours, and during walks along the coast through traveling eyes as that
water spilled by the sky explores the salt and sand.

The lone rogue notes who pierce the quiet with accomplishment, leading up to

The fireworks and crescendos, stimulating and romantic as a long-overdue embrace.

(COVADONGA “returns” and envelops MADRE in a hug.)

POET & SANTIAGO

Maestro, excuse me. I’m sorry; this seems kinda
cacophonous as fuck.

POET

But at the same time, oddly

MADRE

melodic!

POET

I guess.

POET, COVADONGA, & SANTIAGO

So carry on,

POET

Maestro,

POET, COVADONGA, & MADRE

my Lady.

ALL

Play it all to me.

COVADONGA & SANTIAGO

This heart-wrenching ballad...

COVADONGA & MADRE

This wild lullaby...

COVADONGA, SANTIAGO, & MADRE

This magic, cosmic dream!

POET

And I will not laugh nor cry nor scream
but feel balanced, full, deep, and complete,
as I coast upon the surface, sailing finally
at last, into sound peaceful sleep.