EU-LAC FOUNDATION
with the support of the
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR CARE



POEMS THAT ARE MEDICINE:

THE ART OF CARING THROUGH POETRY

POEMS THAT ARE MEDICINE: THE ART OF CARING THROUGH POETRY

This digital anthology gathers poems written by caregivers, poets, activists, and members of communities from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe. These diverse voices, expressed in various languages and tones, reflect on care work in all its forms: the visible and the invisible, paid care as well as care given out of love, connection, or vocation.

Poems That Are Medicine emerges as a project of encounter and recognition. From a birregional, multicultural, and multilingual perspective, this initiative seeks to make care visible as collective knowledge, a shared art, and a practice that crosses generations, territories, and inequalities. Here, poetry becomes a way to heal; here, caring is also a way of writing the world.

Several of these poems were also presented in the exhibition held at the Care Pavilion of the Global Alliance for Care in Mexico City, in the context of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place between August 12 and 15, 2025.

The title of this anthology is inspired by the poems "People Who Are Medicine" by María Teresa González Osorio and "The Art of Caring in the Golden Years" by Bellanida Perea Ponce.

The final selection includes 20 poems chosen from 46 submissions received through an open call organised by the EU-LAC Foundation in July 2025, with the support of the Global Alliance for Care.

This digital publication is part of the commemoration of the International Day of Care and Support (October 29), serving as a tribute to all those who, through their acts of care, sustain and transform our societies.

CREDITS

Selection committee: Pamela Alves, Anna Barrera, Timotheé Ives, Elizabeth Wright Veintimilla
Graphic design: Yaritza Hernández Barrera
With the support of: Global Alliance for Care

ISBN: 978-3-949142-44-4
DOI: 10.12858/1025en
October 2025

EU-LAC Foundation
Fundación EU-LAC

With the support of the Global Alliance for Care

INDEX

SUMAQ AYNI	2
THE ART OF CARING IN THE GOLDEN YEARS	4
GUIDELINES TO LIFE	6
TO CARE	7
THE CAREGIVER'S HANDS	8
FOR YOU, FOR ME, FOR BOTH	9
THE MAP OF OUR HANDS	10
THE SILENCE OF LIVE-IN MAIDS	12
AS LONG AS WE'RE TOGETHER	13
WARMIKUNA PURIRISUN (WOMEN WALKING)	17
I FEEL TOO MUCH, AND MAYBE THAT'S THE POINT	19
MY GRANDMOTHER'S FAVOURITE STORY	22
CARING FOR EACH OTHER	26
PEOPLE WHO ARE MEDICINE	27
TO WASH	29
SILENCE IN MY CARE	30
AT THE HEARTH	31
CONTRADICTIONS	32
I WON'T LET GO...	35
VIVIANA	37

SUMAQ AYNI

She came with black braids
from Cuzco,
with big eyes
and a heart without childhood.
She became a mother to others
when she still played with stones,
because life does not wait
nor ask about ages.
Since then,
everything was a boiling pot,
a broom,
a prayer for others.
She wasn't chosen,
but she chose not to let go.

With time,
she took care of her children's children,
with that same quiet strength,
like someone who breathes out of duty.
Sometimes she sits on the chair
and says:
— I don't want to bother,
but please eat something.
No one teaches her how to rest.

To others' eyes,
her story might seem unfair.
But to her,
it's a gift from God.
Her vocation is not a gift:
it's a wound she learned
to heal by caring.



And if someone questions her,
she answers firmly:
— I want to do it.
It's a choice
many don't understand.

A devotion that doesn't ask for applause,
but does ask for respect.
Because whoever gives care
must know their limits.

Perhaps,
in another life,
she would choose herself first.
But for now,
she will fulfill her mission:
to care,
because helping others
is part of her essence.

Even if it's not always received
with the same devotion,
she will keep caring
in her own *sumaq ayni*.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Alison Abigail Garro Condori, (Peru). Communication and Corporate Image student at UCAL who sees culture, diplomacy, and writing as bridges between worlds. She has represented her university in international projects and is a two-time winner of the Hult Prize at both the OnCampus and Regional levels, demonstrating her strong commitment to social innovation.

The Art of Caring in the Golden Years

It is the golden hour that many fear,
when life grows heavy and the body grows drowsy,
but it is precisely there where tenderness is born,
the quiet flame that makes everything greater.

We are hands that caress memories,
gazes that hold worn-out stories,
caretakers of a reborn childhood,
when the Yay@s return to their early soul.

We clothe their days in peace and patience,
bathe them in sweetness and unhurried tales,
we give them warmth, tenderness, presence,
and bring them the world in a single smile.

In their tired eyes,
the light reflects,
and in their silence,
we learn to speak;
care is an art,
not just a task,
it is loving without measure,
it is knowing how to listen.

To be a lighthouse in the night,
to be solid ground,
when their steps tremble and the future clouds,
to be the sun that blooms the maturing plant,
the simplest gesture,
the deepest kindness.

To care is to offer without counting what is given,
to see in their eyes what we are as well,
to weave shared time with love,
and to give with the soul
what sustains the soul.



If the world moved to this heartbeat,
with a clean heart,
with an endless embrace,
we would see what has aged begin to bloom,
like an eternal garden that never ends.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Bellanida Perea Ponce (Colombia, Spain). Daughter of Adriana Ponce and Azael Perea (R.I.P.), the youngest of five siblings — joyful, loving, and loyal. A certified Normalista Superior and Occupational Health Technician, I am an Afro-descendant woman shaped by resilience and courage. Born in La Paila, Zarzal (Valle del Cauca, Colombia), I emigrated to Spain with faith in building a better future for my family. I love reading, writing, and volunteering with the Red Cross. My story is one of struggle and perseverance, inspiring migrant women to turn adversity into strength. As a single mother, my greatest wish is to give my son a quality education and a different life.

GUIDELINES TO LIFE

"La nuit enveloppait encore ceux qui font briller la France" — Kiyémis
"The night lingered over those who make France shine" — Kiyémis

I grew up poor in the richest part of the city,
whose lights escort those who rise before the sun
starts its morning shift.

I grew up to the sound of strangers turned family:
serving, cooking, cleaning, always scraping.

Keepers of houses they could never afford.
Their earnest, tired hands were my first guidelines
to life.

A joyous lesson, defying all
odds, because love was never meant to grow
in such places.

Yet it did. So, as keepers do
— they went on to build glorious bridges
to their heartache. And had the audacity,
to let their dreams roam free in the pitch-black,
late hours of the night.



Bettina Guigui (France, Ivory Coast, Belgium). Bettina is a writer with a background in literature and cultural studies. Though trained in literary analysis, she found her voice in poetry outside the classroom, through personal exploration and passion. Her poetry dives into the nuanced aspects of topics such as (diasporic) identity, belonging, grief, love, and generational healing.

TO CARE

Not a hand carrying a petal,
or any flower, dead or alive.
Not a hug,
or a cup,
filled with any drink
of choice.
Not a nice moment in front
of the TV, the sunset, or the fire pit.

Care is a hand carrying
the unbearable weight
of wait
it's helping others to receive with dignity
the hug of death.
It is emptying your cup.
is choosing to stay.

And who cares for those who care?

Carlos Pérez Samano (Mexico, United States, Tanzania). Poet, storyteller, and librettist from Mexico, is the author of six books published in Mexico and the U.S., with work featured worldwide. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing and a Master's in Publishing from Rosemont College. He received the Everyday Genius Award in 2021, was the first Artist-in-Residence at the Penn Museum, and was named Author of the Year at the 2022 Philadelphia Latin American Book Fair. His opera Hotel Moctezuma won the Audience Award at the 2025 Fedora Biennale.

The Caregiver's Hands

The eagle guards her nest,
the shepherd guards his flock,
and by caring for older people,
I've spent these recent years nonstop.
Some I've cared for
until their very last breath—
though they've long since gone,
I remember them in death.
There are times when it takes
patience and great endurance,
especially when caring for
someone with dementia and no assurance.
I cared for Mercedes and Araceli,
for Paquita and for Rosa—
beyond their gratitude,
they each taught me so much closer.
The caregiver cares today,
and tomorrow just the same;
that's how the weeks go by,
then months, then years without a name.
How blessed are those hands!
The hands that tended,
the hands that mended,
the hands that often offered
comfort, open-ended.
Those who care for others
often forget about themselves—
that's why we must
value caregivers as well.
For to care for another
requires so much love—
a gift that comes
from somewhere above.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Damary Rodríguez (Colombia, Spain). Born in Colombia, is a devoted lover of nature. Since arriving in Spain four years ago, she has dedicated her time to caring for the elderly. In her free time, she turns to writing as a refuge from the nostalgia of having left her homeland. Damary has written poems, songs, and in 2024, she fulfilled her dream of publishing her first book — a beautiful fable titled The Cry of the Animals.

FOR YOU, FOR ME, FOR BOTH

I offer you my hand, both of them—
I want to help you stand and walk together,
I want to soothe your tears and tremors,
Watch over your sleep and dispel every doubt.
Peeking through the shadow of loneliness,
the petrifying abyss of facing the unknown—
I will never leave you alone, I remain vigilant to scare away anyone who dares to intimidate you,
To remind you of battles won and spare you a few more.
My lips will never know how to say no to you,
except to contradict you
when you believe you can no longer continue.
Every action can be conjugated in the plural—
present and future— in case the past lacked enough deeds worthy of honor.
Because I give you my time, strength, and smile
to keep you company and hold up your walls.
We have switched roles—
You taught me how to walk, and healed my scrapes from talking to strangers,
though I was always kind without knowing names or surnames,
and how to ask for help, making sure someone would answer my call.
Let me support you, I want to be the lighthouse on the shore,
the instructions for use, the sixth sense, your emergency number.
Because I can't find another way to have myself if not by being with you, my prayers carry your name and I send you all my affection.
Because caring for you is another way to say I love you—
I want us to be together again.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Danerine Mendvar (Peru, France). A 20-year-old Peruvian, studies Political Science at Sciences Po (Paris) with the Émile Boutmy scholarship and aims for a Master's in Public Policy. She is a social project manager with an artistic focus, writer, and content creator on education and studying abroad. She founded Nuevos Talentos, a volunteer program certified by Peru's Ministry of Education, and works as a consultant for the UNESCO/IDIL project on indigenous languages. An award-winning author in Spain, Venezuela, and Peru, she also received the Victoria Kent Poetry Prize (2022) and published the novel La Combi.

The Map of Our Hands

There are no borders on the hands
of those who care,
no passport for those who heal,
nor for the arms that hold life.

A Colombian grandmother braiding arepas
for breakfast.
A Guatemalan mother
carrying the sun and the milk on her back.
Care and love
are a universal language;
a language learned through the body.

It is not synonymous with duty.
It is not a fate's conjecture.
Care is resistance.
It is sowing time where everything rushes,
it is weaving a bond where there are only scraps of life.

From a young Haitian woman
singing while washing in the river,
to a Peruvian nurse
watching over another's sleep at night.
Care sometimes knows no rest…
but in its gesture beats the world we want.

We care for each other to keep going;
we care for each other to fight;
we care for each other
because no one else will build
the world we dream of
if we don't start by embracing it.

Because to care is to say:
here you are safe, here you are not alone.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Danilo Peralta (Colombia). Social communicator and journalist. My love for storytelling has taken me to the most beautiful corners of sensitivity in the world. I love to narrate inwardly. All my life, I have been fascinated by the small things in life, especially those who cannot tell their own story and who call me to tell it for them. I have always moved with passion by my side, which makes me feel that life is all about how much of yourself you leave in what you do. And that will always be noticeable.

The Silence of Live-in Maids



Six in the morning, the alarm clock rings.
A new day, the same routine, the same pain.
Perhaps nostalgia, perhaps sadness, perhaps despair.
Leaving her room, the live-in maid has only one mission:
To smile, to obey, to accept, and to show her best version.

Between cleaning bathrooms, mopping the kitchen and the living room,
There is much work and little time to feel the pain.
In that dark, gloomy house, almost like a prison,
Her body moves to the rhythm of the mop and the vacuum cleaner,
But her mind will always be where her heart belongs:
With her family and friends in the land where she was born.

This is the story of María,
Who suffers mistreatment day after day,
Caring with great love for two little ones,
The only ones in that house who smile at her with joy.
For the lady, with sarcasm and veiled words, humiliates her,
And even says, What a good house you've got,
María, you are so lucky!
While the master, every single day,
Undresses her with his filthy gaze.

The day ends. And she cries in silence in her room,
Wanting to quit, for she can no longer bear so much.
But she remembers her debt and her sick mother.
Alone, she comforts herself, thinking this bad spell will not last forever.
This story is not only María's, but of many live-in maids,
Who with trembling hands hold a phone,
And with a lump in our throat and a broken voice,
Say: Mum, I'm fine, nothing is happening to me.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Dora María Bautista Velásquez (Nicaragua). Originally from San Fernando, Nueva Segovia. Daughter of a farmer and a homemaker. In 2010 she was awarded a scholarship to study Medicine in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where she remained for four years. In 2014 she returned to Nicaragua to complete her studies at the Autonomous University of Nicaragua, practising the profession from 2015 until May 2023. That year she emigrated to Bilbao, Spain, where she currently lives, dedicated to household and care work, with the hope of returning to the practice of medicine.

As Long As We're Together

The bus swallows bodies,
reggaeton blares from broken speakers
while the driver steers
with one hand on the wheel,
the other on his cellphone,
cursing at other drivers from his seat.

Twenty people breathe
the same stale air.
No conductor,
just silent shoves
and the smell of gasoline mixed
with the sweat of exhaustion.

No one sees, no one hears,
each lost in their blind world.
A mother boards
with her little girl in her arms.
The fragile child,
with cerebral palsy,
rests against her mother's chest.

Some heads turn:
looks of pity,
looks of disgust.
Seats remain taken,
eyes look away.

She walks to the middle,
searching for balance
among bodies that won't give space,
holding tighter
to her sleeping girl,
her eyelids barely trembling
with angels' dreams.



But the bus keeps filling:
more bodies, more complaints,
“Move!” “Push!”
shouts that break
the bubble of peace.

Suddenly,
the little girl wakes.
Her eyes seek refuge
in all the noise,
but fear invades her.

In her mother’s arms,
her little body tenses,
becomes stiff like a dry branch,
arms shake uncontrollably,
legs tremble
like leaves in a storm.

Her breath cuts off,
small gasps
as her mouth
fills with white foam.

Her eyes roll back,
searching for escape
from this painful world.
The involuntary movements
hit the passengers,
accidental elbows,
kicks in the air
that graze other bodies.
“Gross, that foam!”
“Lady, control your daughter!”
“She’s hitting us!”
“Shut her up, stop her!”

The mother, desperate,
holds her tighter,
tries to contain
that fighting little body,
struggling
against an invisible enemy.

Then,
amid the chaos,
the mother closes her eyes,
breathes deeply,
and whispers in her ear:
“My love, I’m here,
everything will be okay.”

The world turns to glass,
a transparent bubble
wraps them both.
Voices go silent,
shouts become
lip movements
without sound.

Only two hearts
beat in unison.

The mother rocks her girl,
caresses her damp hair,
speaks with the voice
only mothers know:
“My brave little one,
breathe with me,
feel my calm,
feel my love.”
The stiff little body
slowly relaxes;
spasms soften



to the rhythm of the caresses,
her breathing syncs
with her mother's.

Outside, the world keeps shouting,
inside, only exists
the refuge of motherly arms
and the miracle of love
that calms storms.

When the crisis passes,
the mother rises
with her treasure in her arms,
walks to the door
amid looks that turn away.

She steps off the bus,
plants a soft kiss
on her daughter's forehead,
and whispers the oldest promise in the world:
"As long as we're together,
my love,
everything will be alright."

Estefani Pamela Ildefonso Gamarra (Peru). Born in Otuzco, holds a degree in Special Education from the Catholic University of Trujillo. She doesn't just study inclusion: she lives and builds it every day. Founder of Estrellas en Ascenso and Constelación de Capacidades, she has turned disability into superpower and vulnerability into strength. For her, poetry is not art but revolution: each poem a door opening, each metaphor a bridge to human dignity.

Warmikuna puririsun (Women Walking)

I, Andean woman,
have been a caretaker since existence itself—
caretaker of life,
of nature,
and of our land.
I guard, with identity, the dream of my people.
You, woman,
how long you've been made invisible,
but now we are paving the way.
To care is to sustain the root,
to nurture the seed
until it blooms.
To care is to walk through memories
as you comb the hair
of the one who, as a child,
dried your tears.
To care is political—
unpaid,
without schedule,
and sometimes,
without the State.
To care is to be an Andean tide, shifting consciousness with identity and justice.
We are Andean women,
we are strong women,
strong caretakers.
We are the ones who sustain life.
To care is a magical, beautiful word.
To you, my little boy,
my little girl,
to you, grandpa—
with these little herbs I've lovingly grown,
I want to ease your sorrows,
caress your wounds.
We, women,
to care is also to cry out:
Here we are!

Gloria Trinidad Huanca Mamani (Peru). Andean woman and a leader from the province of Canchis. I was born in Ayaviri and grew up in Sicuani, where I put down roots with my family. From a young age, I joined women's organisations, where I discovered the importance of exercising my citizenship and learned about rights, caregiving, and gender justice. I've lived through pain and violence, but also through resistance and strength—experiences I transformed into a commitment to my community. I am a mother and an artisan, a promoter of care and equality, and through radio, writing, and the organisation Warmikuna Puririsun, I fight for a dignified and free life for all.

I Feel Too Much, and Maybe That's the Point

No one teaches us how to hold sorrow,
not the kind that hides behind smiles.
So, I've learned to cup it gently—
like rainwater, in my palms.

An old friend said, "I'm tired of waking up,"
and I didn't give her answers.
Just sat next to the ache in her silence,
and made space big enough for both of us.

Care is not just kissing and flowers.
It's still waiting outside your door
when you're not ready to open it,
but still needing to know you're not alone.

I learned from my abuela—
who held everyone and forgot herself—
that love can bruise the spine
if no one helps carry the weight.

So now I ask: "How are you really?"
And I mean it. I wish for the long answer.
Even when it's messy. Especially then.
Because people aren't checklists. They're oceans.

Emotional care is rebellion,
in a world that wants us to numb.
To feel is to refuse automation—
to weep is to still be alive.

I write poems like protest signs.
Each verse a soft uprising:
You matter. I see you. I won't walk away.
Not when your storm needs an umbrella.

Some nights, I talk to my mirror.
It's pretty weird right?
Tell the girl inside she's enough.
Not perfect. Not finished. Just enough.

If I offer you my truth,
it's not because I'm broken—
but because I trust you to hold it
without stitching it into shame.

We weren't made to heal alone,
But meant to believe in circles—
in hands that pass hope around
like candles in the dark.

I've seen boys flinch at softness,
taught to fear their own tears.
But I've also seen them bloom
when someone tells them, they're allowed to feel.

There's power in listening—
not to reply, but to receive.
To say: I hear you. I don't need to fix you.
Your pain doesn't make me turn away.

Emotional care is like a dance
between courage and quiet.
It's asking: What do you need today?
And then showing up, even if it's just to sit.

It's rewriting the world
where care is not weakness,
where love isn't earned or asked,
and no one is too heavy to carry.

I want to grow up in a future
where no one's heartbreak is invisible.
Where saying "I'm not okay"
is met with arms, not silence.

So, I won't pretend I don't feel deeply—
just because comfort is hard to find.
I'd rather be real than safe in silence.
Just to proof I'm done hiding.

Until then, I offer this poem.
A small, steady promise:
I will love loudly, care fiercely,
and never call softness a flaw.

Julieta Cobos Maúrtua (Peru). Peruvian student at Trener, born on September 25, 2009. She discovered her passion for poetry at a young age, finding in it a way to express creativity and emotion. She considers herself very studious and deeply cares about her academic journey and her future, always striving to grow intellectually while also pursuing her artistic voice. Writing allows her to connect with herself and the world around her, blending curiosity, dedication, and imagination.

My Grandmother's Favourite Story

I don't quite remember my age but my mind says I was still small.
It rained so hard that day
in the afternoon, when bundled up, I went out with my brother.
A tree—or maybe a very grown myoporo—
around the corner from my house, was bent over.
My brother and I passed by,
somehow believing our closeness would help the tree,
so we studied it.
The woody trunk was broken in half, the crown on the ground,
and a few steps away... a nest.
We were both very small, my brother and I.
They were even smaller, the hummingbird chicks.
One seemed to dance while the other slept.

The lesson someone once told us:
"Don't touch the chicks, because the mother will reject them."
With some care and a branch,
we pushed the nest
to hide it among the leaves of the bent tree's crown.
And, by my brother's order, we moved on.

I remember that day as if the sky were a lump of clay,
like a yellow light that can't get through dense curtains.
The air felt thick as we moved away from the nest.

I was so small I didn't dare say it was cruel,
that what we were doing was cruel,
that moving on and leaving the hummingbirds was cruel.

I was so small that maybe I was throwing a tantrum over my feelings.
My older brother hurried me to finish the errands
and come back quickly,
but he was so small he dared to make a promise:
"When we come back, if their mother isn't there, we'll take them home."

Soon, the rain returned with strong winds.
Only then did I understand how the tree had been knocked down.
I saw the telephone wires swinging like my hair.
We started to run.
One block from my house,
when we passed the bent tree,
my brother kept going straight,
but I stopped.
I tried to move the crown and leaves to find the nest.
Rain falling and branches whipping,
there was so much noise.
My wool hat flew off,
the rain now drummed on my head,
my eyelashes gathered drops and I couldn't see.
I felt I didn't have enough time to drag the tree.
A hand on my hair
made me put my hat back on,
another hand on the trunk
finished sliding the branches and leaves aside.
Then, my brother's blue wool hat wrapped around the nest,
and a push on my shoulder made me run toward home.
Now it was my cold hands turning the key to open the door.

We were two small kids with two small hummingbirds,
at first in secret,
until one hummingbird—the smallest—wouldn't stop dancing,
what was really writhing—
it was hurt.

We told my grandmother,
"You shouldn't have brought those chicks,
because the mother will reject them,
and without the mother, they won't survive."
That was her answer.
She told us to change our wet clothes.
I went upstairs with my grandmother repeating her lesson,
while my brother stole her planner.

My grandmother changed my clothes grumpily,
while my brother found the vet's number.
My grandmother dried my hair,
while my brother talked with an assistant.
My grandmother came down with a different expression,
because I explained they wouldn't survive in the rain either,
while I cried to her.

My grandmother looked at them carefully and found them horrible,
with little feathers and ashen skin,
but she brought them a lamp to give them some warmth,
she knitted them a wool bed,
and gave us a box from her teapot to be their home.

The next day,
the smallest hummingbird no longer danced
or writhed.
We buried it and my grandmother planted a kalanchoe on top.

II

We went to the vet,
who admitted he had no experience with hummingbirds,
but his friend outside the city
in the "Valley of Hummingbirds" did.

Every day, my brother and I
caught flies and mosquitoes,
we dried them in the sun and then ground them up.
My grandmother bought honey and a syringe.

Its beak grew and green metallic feathers appeared on its chest.
We called it Mosquitero.
In less than a month it was already hovering with its tiny wings.

I'm thankful to have been on vacation,
because I couldn't sleep.

At night I heard its fluttering in the teapot box,
so I took the lid off,
prepared its syringe,
and scared away my cats,
fed it,
and then lethargy came.

It was still so small when it flew away.
I was still so small when I saw it go.

Many hummingbirds still come to my house.

I still leave water for them to drink.
I'm no longer small,
but I still tell my grandmother the story,
because she no longer remembers.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Kristel Rocio Zapata Coaquira (Peru). Born in Arequipa in 2000, holds a degree in Environmental Engineering from the Catholic University of Santa María and is pursuing a master's in Integrated Environmental Management Systems. Passionate about writing and art, she has explored dance, theatre, and drawing. Inspired by Peru's cultural and natural diversity, she seeks to balance science with creativity..

CARING FOR EACH OTHER

That morning, when for the first time I cleaned what you could no longer
I also wiped away the shame I sensed in your gaze.
And I did it with gentle words that, surely, would build your trust in me.
My duty is clear: to feed your body; yet I strive to nourish your eager soul, every day.
Your loneliness as an elderly man, and my loneliness as an immigrant,
without a doubt, meet in the garden of solitudes — to keep each other company.
Often, I pretend to be surprised and listen attentively
to the same story told day after day,
just to see the sparkle in your eyes,
and to reward the effort with which you dig through those lost memories.
Sitting next to you, I watch you as you sleep,
and as if your drowsiness and my watchfulness spoke to one another,
I reflect and come to realize that, without knowing it,
you're also caring for me.
You make sure that my work not only puts bread on my table,
but also feeds my joy.
You make sure that when I do something for you, with deep affection,
my heart feels fulfilled and truly valued.



Translation of the original in Spanish

Manuel Alejandro Rodríguez Moreno (Colombia, Spain). I use the pseudonym Manú. I am originally from Colombia, but I currently live in Valencia, Spain, and among other things, I work as a caregiver for an elderly person. I am passionate about poetry, a lover of words, and an enthusiastic reader. I write poetry when the moment calls for it. I write short stories when imagination overflows. I believe that if a poem brings joy, moves someone, or emotionally disorients them — then it was worth writing.

People Who Are Medicine

There are words that make no noise
but hold you up
like a warm whisper in the face of fear.
There are small gestures
that save you from the abyss:
a cup of tea,
a hand that asks no questions
but stays.

Care is not always spoken;
sometimes it's a silence
that wraps you like a blanket.

To care is to be there when it hurts,
when the body gives in,
when hope curls up
like a frightened child in the corner.

To care is to not have the answers
but still have time.
It's wiping the soul's fever
with a handkerchief of tenderness.

It's staying in the middle of the storm
even when you're also cold
and scared
and want to run away.

There are those who heal without knowing medicine,
just by being,
just by looking,
just by saying,
"I'm here" or "I'm with you,"
even if I don't know what to do,
I'm here anyway.

Because sometimes,
that's what care is:
a quiet way
of saying:
I won't leave you alone in this.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Maria Teresa González Osorio (Mexico, Germany). Originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, now lives in Germany. She holds degrees in Law (UABJO) and Psychology (UNAM). She offers psychological support to Spanish-speaking communities and leads workshops, including creative writing sessions. She is a writer and has published four books of poetry and one on parenting. She has contributed articles to various magazines in both Oaxaca and Germany. Some of her works have been translated into German, Portuguese, and English in different anthologies.

TO WASH

It seems inconsequential.
But for as long as she can remember,
she's washed the dishes, the clothes, the walls.
She runs the house.

And she does it willingly.
Even though she hates the slippery feel of soap,
which discolours her nails and makes her skin burn—
she is a daughter, and that's how she pays rent and other expenses.

But one day, she compares
her brother's smooth hands
to her broken nails and tired lines,
and she grows furious—because he does nothing.

She brings it up to her mother,
who is scandalised,
because housework
is their concern.

And so she ends up again
washing the dishes, the clothes, the walls,
the roughness, the mistreatment, and the pain,
at home, school, work, and everywhere else—
because these are "women's concerns."

Translation of the original in Spanish

Meng-Ping Hsu (Mexico). Holds a Master's in Conflict Resolution from the University of Essex and a BA in International Relations from Tecnológico de Monterrey. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Political Research at the University of Oxford. She has worked as a public policy analyst across social, public, and private sectors, focusing on evidence-based policy, democratic strengthening, and inclusive data. She has also taught at the university level.

SILENCE IN MY CARE

Vague promises with no end in sight,
empty laughter, a heart without signal.
It hurts to be this way and always say "yes,"
it hurts to break myself just to make others happy.

Slow falls that ache endlessly,
a weary soul, not knowing where to go.
So many things to do, a "happy" mind,
but the body no longer feels the same.

I find myself lost, without comfort or help,
I was always the one who could do it all...

Even though I didn't know how to speak before,
now that I can, I don't know how to stay silent.
I wish I could scream to the wind: I can't take it anymore!
But I remain in silence, pretending to be at peace.

In my attempt to fit in, I lost myself.
And that hurts more than watching others be disappointed in you.

My pillow knows all my suffering,
yet still, I chose to smile each day.
A borrowed smile, just to pretend,
an empty smile that makes me die inside.

Sometimes I look in the mirror and I'm not there,
I'm only the reflection of what I give.

And yet...
maybe someday I'll learn to say yes to myself,
without fear, without guilt, without leaving myself behind.

Translation of the original in Spanish

Naomi Lizbeth Alicia Peña Chavez (Peru). Young woman who exudes leadership, sensitivity, and passion in everything she does. Her voice is her greatest weapon and poetry is her safe space, where she captures authentic emotions and lived experiences. Naomi has shown a clear vocation for transforming realities and leading projects focused on mental health, leadership, and core values. With unwavering aspirations, Naomi doesn't write just to move hearts — she writes to awaken, inspire, and motivate others to change the course of their lives, firmly believing in the true transformative power of words.

At the Hearth

To capture love in the heat of a pot,
one must form an alliance with the earth,
with fire, with water, and with the wind.
Fill a bowl of tenderness from the heart,
to guide the hands that, by now well-practiced,
embody the sacred culinary dance.
A small piece of time welcomes the ritual of preparation and boiling.
The steam rises, generously tempting the sense of smell,
and the imagined flavor begins to marinate the taste.
Mothers and grandmothers offer the food of life
with the innocent simplicity of a sigh:
"Eat, my son, eat"; "Eat, my daughter, eat."
That expression embraces the one it touches and, because of this,
has been thanked by thousands of voices and affections.
The one who cooks offers their being in a well-seasoned act of love.
"Eat, my daughter, eat"; "Eat, my son, eat"—
they invite with their hands, shaped like a bowl,
holding the intention to comfort and nourish.
Hands that offer love and care
in one of its most refined,
and therefore, most certain forms: food.
Bite after bite, love sinks in
until it arrives warm in the gut,
where it becomes energy, becomes medicine, becomes life...



Translation of the original in Spanish

Sandra González (Guatemala). Writer and researcher of Guatemalan literature. She has studied business administration, Latin American literature, and human rights. A member of Literatas que dan lata and Colectiva Escritoras Guatemaltecas, her fiction and poetry have appeared in several anthologies and cultural events. She promotes Guatemalan poetry through the Facebook page *Poesía guatemalteca*.

CONTRADICTIONS

I wake up every morning thinking, "Today, I will be more patient"

but it takes thirty seconds for me to say no three times

to hear the tone, the cadence, and sometimes, the voice of my parents coming out of somewhere deep in me that I thought no longer was there.

It is barely 7 am, and I have failed in my purpose. No enterprise makes you feel like a failure more than parenting.

When I was childless, I promised myself that I would make my own mistakes in this parenting journey.

I spent too many nights washing dishes and reflecting on how my parents hurt me without noticing; they were doing the best they could with what they had.

I kept thinking about how I became a better son once I became a parent. How I learned to call them out on their mistakes and ask them to own them.

Not literally, but in my head.

How I can be responsible for myself, finally, as I am responsible for others.
I know how my parents failed me and also how they gave me more than I deserved. I do the best I can every day, but I am sure I am also hurting my children in ways only time will hopefully tell me.

I don't get an annual performance review to course correct on this, but I do get brutal feedback, sometimes unasked, sometimes rightfully deserved.

Vacations have turned into more work. Vacation time means connection and exhaustion. Work feels like a haven from the arduous work of caring and parenting. As vacations end, we all come back to the routine of school nights, snacks, sports practices, and loads of laundry. I miss the go-fish endless games and the excess of markers on the dining room floor. I don't miss stepping on toys or being hit randomly by paper planes.

But I find myself walking with a cup of coffee around this house in the morning hours of a random Tuesday, yearning for the presence of my children.

I hate their stuff everywhere; I spend too much time cleaning it and I also despise the empty spaces of their temporal absence.
I want to work out more, get outside, and run, but the work of caring is hard on my body. Wrists and thumbs pay the price, sore hip muscles, sore arms, and tight shoulders. The strenuous work of rocking a baby, keeping them close to you, so close

you can smell their newness and sense of possibility.

The pain of closeness we have to pay as parents, if we choose to.

And then, the migraines.

They come and go, and the need to take time off to rest while knowing that there is no time to rest.

How do I teach my children to care for themselves if they see me pushing through pain? If I pretend everything is okay when I can barely stand the light, the noise, their voices?

Time goes very fast, as you see them hit themselves with different parts of the same piece of furniture, as the marks we make with a black pen on the kitchen wall serve as a reminder of their imminent growth. Time goes very slowly when one yells without reason and the other one without warning, and the oatmeal is burning, and your phone falls.

Every other day, there are two minutes when all things fall apart, and hell breaks loose.

You yell, and you feel terrible afterward. You don't yell at them, but you say too many things to your partner in two gestures, and you know that what it is meant to be a doubles tennis team sometimes feels more like a chess game. Sometimes, you breathe, and let the chaos reign. All your life, you have been taught to keep swimming.

As a parent, I am learning each day how to hold my breath for longer and longer underwater. I cannot just keep swimming.

I am so relieved when they are finally asleep, and I can devote myself to the pleasure of folding clothes in three. The kitchen is clean again, there are no Cheerios that I can step on and drag around the house. The coffee is ready for the morning, and there is silence. Silence. Then, I miss them. We miss them. We look at pictures of the day, the week, the month, last year. We miss them. The cute things they did, the words they are trying to say, the questions they ask, and the guts it takes to be honest:

Did your parents hit you? Do we believe in God? What happens when you die? Am I going to die? Are you going to die? Can I have more candy?

These are the hardest years, and these are the most precious ones. When they are young enough for me to solve their problems with time, attention, or care.

I have never heard a parent say, "I spent too much time with my children", it is always the opposite. But sometimes, presence is so hard. Sometimes, as I try to be present, I realize how distracted I am, how tired I am, and how bored I can get.

Can I say that?

It is boring to be so present sometimes. It is hard to recognise how distracted I am, too. Tensions, conundrums, and answers that only time can reveal.

The relief of dropping them off again at school for the new year comes with the sadness and the fears of letting them go back to the world, A harsh, difficult, wondrous, hopeful world.

As I put my head on the pillow and think about the day, I make a mental account of all the things that went well and all the things that did not. Thinking how I want to be the perfect parent and knowing that perfection is an illusion, a harmful illusion. Wanting to be better without pain and knowing that it is through mistakes and pain that I truly learn. My children teach me about life and myself, and they show me without knowing that there are parts of me that they trigger, but they are not theirs to carry, they are mine to deal with.

Do they know how much we learn from them?

I was told that parents know everything, but sometimes I wonder who is really teaching who about living.

Sebastián Molano (Colombia, United States). Parent, a migrant, and a writer. He has built a career on international development while learning about care, parenting, feminism, and solidarity. Since 2014, he leads the work of Defying Gender Roles , blending together feminism, masculinity, and care.

I WON'T LET GO...

And you never let go
as I ventured into life.
And you never said no
for I was your child.
For you promised to be
my mother, my protector.
And you never. Not once.
No, you didn't let go.

And now I sit next to your bed
as you sat with me when I was your babe
and I see your fragile frame
Was it like this? Did it feel the same?

Those endless hours, one spilling into another
When you gave me yourself, the love of the mother
When I lay in despair and you cared
All these questions in my head as I watch you. Scared.

For now it's up to me to stroke your face and isn't it but odd?
How life works and twists, never would I've thought
That one day you'll search to lay
The weight of your world onto me,
for now I am the calming bay.

No longer, no more, that tiny babe
but a woman standing at the precipice of fate
And I know I ought to lose you, there's nothing left to fight
And I know I have to hold you, steady for both of us in this plight

Until the day your eyes close into the eternal sleep
And my heart for everything we once were will weep
I need to stand strong, steady the shaking ground
Even if it kills me, if it kills me inside.

Show you strength for isn't it but that?
The essence of what we do when we give care?
And I can't stutter. That I owe you.
For everything you gave me - the life, the love, the whole of you.

So today I promise to be your protector
And no, not for a second. Will I let go...

Susanna Ladecky (Suecia). Stockholm-based documentary photographer capturing authentic moments of mothers, families, and couples. She favors spontaneity over perfection, creating emotional photos and films that reflect real life. She also collaborates with lifestyle brands and occasionally lectures on portraiture. Her recent photo-poetry exhibition, The Legacy of a Mother, is now a permanent feature at Stockholm's first motherhood café.

VIVIANA

Viviana feels like she's out of breath
as if she were sinking
to the bottom of the sea
the light growing farther and farther away.

She wakes up
in bed 15 of the medical ward
with a view of the avenue
the sun shining on her face
but she still feels like she's drowning
cancer devours her lungs
like a giant, dark fish.

Her birthday is just a few days away
Daughter, take me to Las Grutas,
I want to spend it at the beach.

There's little we can do for her:
we increase the morphine dose
tilt the bed to forty-five degrees
and get a fan
to blow on her face.

Viviana closes her eyes and breathes
rising from the deep toward the surface
floating in the water, she nears the shore
and feels the breeze move her hair
she smiles:
thank you for bringing me the sea.



Translation of the original in Spanish

Victoria Macayo Seitune (Argentina). Born in Esquel, Chubut. She moved to Buenos Aires to study medicine, graduating in 2021. She now lives in Bariloche, completing a Residency in General and Family Medicine with a rural focus. A poet as well, she has joined literary workshops, contributed to anthologies, and is working on her first poetry book.



EU-LAC Foundation
Fundación EU-LAC



With the support of the
Global Alliance for Care

2025