



**EYES OF
MANY
THINGS**

César Chávez Academy

FOREWORD

This book wouldn't even be a book were it not for the 75 people who made it possible (3 teachers, Ms. Ellis, Ms. Peña, Mr. Rhein and their 72 students.) Shout-outs to them before I even begin to say anything else.

What else might be said? Well, this is a special book in that the poems inside were written during a special/historic time. Twenty years from now, who among us will look back on 2020-2021 and NOT think "pandemic"? Not think "Covid-19"? I know I will, but I'll also remember, not just what was and was not happening around us—the staying/learning/teaching at home, the masking up, the physical distancing, etc.—but our response: our adaptability, our flexibility, our willingness to learn, yes, in new ways. Will Zoom be around in twenty years? I'm sure in some shape or form we will still be staring at our screens, via laptop, smart phone, pupil eye lens microchip, etc. But that's all waiting for us in the future, and I want to speak to the right now, and how the words of these 5th grade students were an essential part of MY education as a writer, as a teaching artist, as a human being going through the challenges of a pandemic and the challenges of having to relearn how to teach in a virtual classroom (not to mention learning to teach sitting down). Let me tell you, it's not easy to sit in a chair for a 45-minute stretch (without so much as getting up to stretch). I might have known a thing or two about how to stretch out a sentence, but stretches for my aching lower back, this I had to google.

It wasn't easy learning how to share a screen or use a virtual whiteboard or to keep up with a chat. You know what they say about old dogs (yes, I'm the old flea-bitten dog who's been barking poetry with InsideOut for over 25 years) and teaching that old dog new tricks. What these 72 students and 3 teachers taught me was how to be open, how to sit, how to be patient, how to fetch, how to not take myself too seriously, and how to give myself some grace. I loved early on, in the Zoom classroom, how often the students taught me how to use this new technology (and they did so without poking fun at this old dog). And not only this—the learning that took place off the page—but the fact that each week the students wrote, and turned in homework, and stretched out their sentences, and offered up advice, and never seemed to tire (though I'm sure they did tire) of this old dog and this old dog barking up the same old tree, week after week: noun this, noun that, detail that, stretch that sentence, what more do we need to know, pay attention, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. So thank you all for listening, and for sharing your world with me, and for being here each week, and making my day and heart that much less lonely, and that much more full.

— Mr. Pete

WHAT HAPPENS TO A DREAM UNDREAMED

I think a dream undreamed
is like a bed without any blankets
that won't let you sleep at night.

Or maybe a dream undreamed
is like a chick without its mom,
sad and lonely without a guide.

Or maybe a dream undreamed
is like a student without a teacher,
with no one to teach them.

IT'S BEEN TOO LONG

I'm tired of not being able to sleep at night.
It's been too long since I've seen my family.
I want to play with my dogs.

It's been too long since I've been in a real classroom.
I want to see my family together.
I'm tired of not being able to go into a real classroom.

I want to see my friends again.
I'm tired of quarantine.
It's been too long since I've been outside.

Let me find light in being myself.
Let me see light in becoming a better person.
Let the light be like finding some treasure.

SOMETIMES I FEEL

Today I am feeling happy
like a guinea pig when it eats bell peppers.

Yesterday I was feeling sad
like an orange cat with a hurt paw.

Sometimes I feel tired
like a tiger climbing trees all day long.

When I think about cats on the streets,
I feel sad like a kitten left in the cold rain.

WHAT HAPPENS TO A DREAM UNDREAMED

A dream that goes undreamed
Is like a plate without food
A toy without stuffing or beans
A washer without clothes
A chip without guacamole
A pig without mud
A puppy without a home
A soccer ball without air
A zebra without black stripes

SOMETIMES I FEEL

Today I am feeling very happy
like when I open a Christmas present.

Yesterday I was feeling sad
like a panda when they steal bamboo.

Sometimes I feel confused
like a dog when they hear a weird sound.

When I think about grandma, I feel sad
like a dog that doesn't get treats.

PAYING ATTENTION

I went outside and heard the birds chirping.
It was windy and sunny. The birds are beautiful to see
with the sun and the blue sky. It's tempting
to lay down looking down at the sky. It didn't feel
like Wednesday. It felt like a Friday.

WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES

When I close my eyes
I see a Ferris wheel
with a bunch of families on it
and there's this one family
high-fiving each other one by one.

When I close my eyes
I see a panda rolling down
a large hill then splashing into a pond.

When I close my eyes
I see a little girl holding on tight
to her stuffed animal while thunder strikes.

When I close my eyes
I see Tinkerbell and her friends
racing around Pixie Hollow.

When I close my eyes
I see elders sitting down
laughing and drinking a drink.

When I close my eyes
I see a mother having a tea party
with her daughter.

THE SHADE

I'm tired of wearing a mask every time I go out.
It's been too long since I got to see my friends and hug them.
I want to go to a restaurant and not have to wear a mask.

I'm tired of not being able to play sports.
It's been too long since I have enjoyed playing at the park.
I want to feel normal again and not feel afraid.

I'm tired of being worried about all of my friends and family's health.
It's been too long since we have been able to all be together as a family.
I want life to go back to normal.

Let me find light in everyone's health.
Let me see light in the eyes of loved ones like the bright sun.
Let the light be like a window opening to better times for our future.