

Quiero decirte algo

Audio texts · Tamara Cubas · 2023

I want to tell you clearly what I want but what I want is not so clear

so what I want will not be possible

but at least I will try

will you try to understand me?

I am going to make an effort to explain myself but I would need something from you to understand me

will you make an effort?

an effort beyond listening?

First I am going to ask you

to look for a bench

a park bench

every city has them

a bench, a public space to sit down in

You have to look for it first with your eyes

while you listen to me

there, you are spotting one or two possibilities

if you are lucky you may even get to choose

the bench closest to you

or the one most comfortable for you

benches are stops

pauses in a city that never stops

from that urban pause you will be able to hear me better

I hope you are already heading toward the bench

at best you have already arrived

if you have not found your bench yet, please, press pause

and press play again once you find it

This is not a notice or a lament or a warning.

This is an armed robbery in the middle of your quiet breakfast on your day off

This is a car that rear-ends you and pushes you into the one in front, blocking all the traffic when you were heading home late on Friday

This is a piece of bad news in a long streak of bad hours, days and months

But I need you to make an effort anyway

not because it is good

not because it is fair

not because it is pleasant

but because I need you

and I believe that you, sooner or later, will need something

or someone

and I hope that someone acts the way you are going to act now

because you are going to act, right?

but I don't want you to take this as something rude-aggressive-intense

not even as passive-violent

I want you to feel this like a kiss

a kiss on the cheek

that is how I want to be

like a kiss you liked, one you leave with, and at the end of the night as you go to bed you rub your cheek because you still remember it

intermittent but present

So I speak as if you and I were going to save someone

me speaking and you listening

as if we were going to save people who depend on me speaking and on you listening

they depend on us

Will you listen to me?

I hope so

What do you say we prevent a disaster today?

if this has reached you it is because there is a real chance you will listen to me

it doesn't reach just anyone

because not just anyone listens

The world goes on out there

while I speak and you listen

the world happens, banks are robbed while they rob us and we let ourselves be robbed

people need to eat, work, love, laugh, cry

couples make love

children play in the park

politicians on the campaign trail

drugs are produced in the fields and in the Coca-Cola laboratories

someone wins the lottery

someone loses their house keys

someone accidentally bites their tongue

someone gets stressed because nothing goes right

while I speak and you listen

Traveling has never been as easy as it is today

never have so many people traveled so fast, so easily, so simultaneously

and yet for some people traveling is still as difficult, risky and slow as it always was

for some

not for me who speaks, not for you who listens

Someone right now is traveling with difficulty, with fear, not knowing if they will reach their destination

that someone is far more likely to be a woman than a man

that is, if you were born a woman you have many more chances of traveling today in the same conditions as 5 centuries ago

data

facts

that's how it is

If you were born a man there are many more chances that you are in charge of the journey

that you are charging a woman for her journey and that at some point you decide whether you will keep your word

sorry

it is a sincere apology because I don't want you to enter this story that way

It's just that while I speak and you listen

somewhere

on some sea

in some desert

on some plane

at some border

a woman is in someone's hands

At the mercy of another person who waits to decide about her

I think Peter Pan said: "every time someone says they don't believe in fairies, a fairy drops dead somewhere in a forest"

Believe in what I tell you

like a kiss on the face that you remember years later

I must tell you about them

what they do and undo

their dreams and their sorrows

because if I don't

here

now

their story will die

and somewhere in the forest of the world a fairy...

I was afraid to tell you this

Speaking is dangerous

it is like throwing a stone into a well whose bottom you cannot see

but you know that down there at the bottom there is someone who fears a monster

our stone can help them defend themselves

but if it falls on them it can kill them

Speaking is saving and killing at the same time

without knowing what will happen

If you don't know how to listen

Listen simply

stripped bare

like someone taking off their clothes

naked

Listen like someone diverting a river

with the force of the sun that makes this planet germinate

and with the delicacy of a dream interrupted by the waking of morning

Listen squalidly

Brutal

plain

broken

wandering

Erratically

traveler

Adrift

Like a castaway

good

did you notice that listening standing up is different from listening sitting down

listening, speaking, reading, you know that in ancient times everything was done standing

from the philosophy of the Peripatetics

to the writing of Hemingway

all standing

but sitting

this bourgeois comfort is a luxury that in the past very few people could afford

now, in the contemporary world

this

is a universalized luxury

Almost an obligation

one must travel seated on public transport

one must work seated in the office

one must watch the cinema or the theater seated

but one also waits seated in prison cells

and one travels seated on the rafts that sink at the gates of Europe

and one travels seated in the trunks and crates of the trucks that move humans across borders

all of them seated

like you

now

Seated

By invitation or by obligation

Seated

Waiting

Without moving

At rest

While the city carries out its plan

While actions are executed

While movements follow one another

Companies go bankrupt and children are born

Weapons are fired and food rots

Buildings collapse and people make love

And they fight and they sue each other and they hurt each other and they seek each other
and they mourn each other

While you sit here

In the safety of our contemporaneity

On a public bench in a public square in a public country

Belonging to everyone and to no one

Now, look

Look around you

Look at the world

Look at the agitated body of the crowds

They run, they cross the street, they honk their horns, they smoke, they talk on the phone,
they laugh

How are those bodies in relation to yours

Think of their muscles

Think of the distance between their muscles in action, tense, strong, rhythmic, active

And your bourgeois languor protected by the art of this artistic act

Your brain protects you

Their activity begins, the laziness of the body that rests while the world burns its calories

YOU ARE different

Their frenzy distances you

YOU ARE the pause of an assembly-line production machine that never stops

You are being a problem

You are being the resistance

The revolution

Your own secret and insignificant revolution in a world where every gesture is called upon to be heroic

Abandoning

While your body lies abandoned there on that bench,

While I speak to you and you listen

Someone is crossing some desert

The muscles in action of those who cross deserts are different from the ones you are seeing now in the city.

You, who by looking at those you see, are generating that pause, this heroic pause to think of those other women who are now in that desert.

Let's imagine that desert, open your eyes, remove every building, street, sidewalk, urban furniture, cars and public transport, remove everything, in the blink of an eye you go on removing one by one all the objects and people and vegetation, you remove everything, everything, everything,

Then a desert remains, there you are, sitting on a rock in the desert

As you cross the desert your legs and hands fill with thorns. When someone gives you their hand to help you past an obstacle, yours and his dig in deeper. For some three months after arriving your body keeps expelling thorns.

The desert is an oven and your body is the food.

If you put your foot in the wrong place someone may mistake you for food

In the desert everything is devour or be devoured

The rattlesnake's bite is one example

Its bite is like a lasso of fire

It breaks bones with a pain that burns and rises.

when you hear the rattle sometimes it is too late

but the truth is that many of them you will never hear

If it is very hot then there are no snakes

In extreme heat, the body, trying to cool itself, sweats, releases fluid; in the long run this produces dehydration, muscle spasms, body aches and exhaustion-

In the desert the ambient temperature exceeds 40 degrees and the body begins to collapse. The brain orders the muscles to work less, while the chemical processes inside the cells are affected, causing irreversible damage to several organs.

Then the body stops sweating because blood no longer flows to the skin.

Dehydrating means breaking that bodily balance. The kidney is forced to work with less water, so the urine is more concentrated. The cells, accustomed to a certain concentration of salts, begin to send fluid to the periphery, with the consequent damage to the myocardium and brain.

The airways dry out. A stinging sensation arises. The eyes sink, breathing becomes short and panting, the skin stays folded, it loses its elasticity.

If we lose fluid, blood pressure drops. Cardiac filling pressure decreases, the heart does not fill completely, so it contracts more weakly. It is a vicious circle: it contracts less, sends less blood, and so on. A spiral that can end in circulatory shock. Consciousness is lost, circulation fails, blood does not reach the brain and death occurs

On top of all this, if luck is not on our side, there may also be the famous dust cloud. Traveling from desert to desert, an enormous cloud of dust thousands of kilometers wide often sweeps across them and everything found there

The particles measure between 2.5 and 10 microns, which are the respirable particles. So they can enter through the nose and mouth as you breathe and lodge in the trachea, in the bronchi, and the smallest can even reach the terminals and the alveoli of the lungs

Vomiting black dust

asphyxia

lung pain

A dangerous natural phenomenon. Living dust full of bacteria, viruses, spores, iron, mercury and pesticides

Deadly dust that travels in search of its victims

in the end the desert awaits you

The sun's rays can blind you, you must walk for days in temperatures of up to 50°C -if it is summer-, or freeze to death in winter, and you have to cross long mountainous stretches that are extremely rugged and where there is no help at all if you happen to need it".

Because you will need it

Because the desert awaits you with millions of stones

but there is also- just as harsh and just as deadly- its flora and fauna. This is an environment where all living beings, such as cacti, scorpions and rattlesnakes, are there to bite you, tear you or injure you.

And if you happen to die

no grave awaits you

no rest in peace awaits you

for the bodies simply disappear,

At great speed the vultures destroy the bodies and the personal belongings, and scatter the bones over great distances, they devour the body, separate the bones from the flesh and destroy what was once a whole person.

If the group you were traveling with had the decency to cover you with rocks so the animals would not eat you, your body will then be destroyed much faster, because rocks conduct heat and that makeshift oven cooks the food of your body, giving off smells that draw insects and animals from miles around.

The desert devours you, consumes you, tears you to pieces, blurs you away.

Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return

You are alone

But memory reminds us

That we are not alone

Our languor resembles that of bank managers in their offices

Our solitude is that of priests in their quarters

Our moral rebellion is akin to that of networked pedophiles

Our abandonment is that of the suicidal

We are surrounded

Right now thousands of women are crossing through the stillness and the sun

In the same bodily position as us at times, because the rest of the time you walk

Beneath a desert cactus legions of women rest and breathe with the same listlessness as ours

Just as you look, they are looking right now

With your same silence

With your same passivity

With your same mindset

Longing to reach the city you live in

Longing one day to sit on your bench

Longing

From your bench, from the comfort of your bench, just listen to me, only that

I saw things

I lived through things

It's the same

everyone who crosses gets pills for muscle pain

they didn't give me any

Some, when they get them, swallow them all at the start and spend the whole way vomiting,
It's natural to want to take it right away
by the third day of walking your muscles are already wrecked
I remember once we had to run across a highway and I couldn't,
my legs wouldn't respond anymore
So the coyote grabbed me and dragged me running, literally dragging, my legs wouldn't
respond
and I was thinking about the muscle pill
while they dragged me
Someone is always dragging someone
You are always running or rushing from one place to another
you flee toward something
fear is the road
We were crossing a whole lot of plowed fields,
You stepped without knowing what you were stepping on, but your feet sank in
We were trampling the crop but it wasn't food
or we would have grabbed it and eaten it
it was a plantation of I don't know what
there's no time to look
only to walk and keep moving without thinking, without letting your feet stay sunk for long
in case it sinks or gets caught in a trap, a hole, a snake
and there you walk and walk
we were a group of about 20
but you'd see other groups of like 100 people, with people carrying babies in their arms
at one point someone says get down and we get down
everything full of thorns and a patrol stops nearby and starts shining its lights and leaves us
waiting, all night there, belly to the ground in the thorns
and he comes back and tells us there's the wall we're going to jump
and the wall was very high and then the fence
you had to climb and then on the other side let yourself drop
a girl tells me that the other time a woman broke her leg when she let herself drop and they
left her there
and right then I told myself, I'm not jumping that, I can't

and I went back, we all went back.
we hadn't paid him, because you pay when you arrive
we went back at 3 in the morning
and they send us to wait in a room
20 men and me.
I didn't even lie down,
I leaned against the wall but I never slept,
I was very afraid
The next day the pollero grabs about four of us,
puts us in a pickup truck
we're up there riding for a while not knowing where we're going
until he stops in the middle of nowhere and tells us to run in one direction without stopping or
looking back
and we started running
then we went along a cobbled path and ended up at a creek,
and there we had to wait until nightfall
with no food, because they tell you not to bring anything,
don't bring anything heavy
that we'll walk by night and by morning we'll arrive
they tell you
then more men arrived
about 16 men and me, a woman
I left with a backpack with socks, some pants and a few other things
and I gave it away because there was a very skinny boy with a very thin shirt
frozen
I put on my sweatshirt and gave him the pants and the two pairs of socks so he could put
them on however and wherever he could
in the end we were all huddled up tight,
it was so fucking cold
there was no more malice,
the only thing that mattered was getting rid of the cold
the pollero had his black garbage bag to get into and keep warm at night

but nobody had told me anything
I was shivering with cold
there was a couple with a teenage daughter who I think heard my teeth and said to me,
come, come, and I got in between them
I got into their bag
I felt something deeply moving
they saved me
with their bag
like a womb
at night the desert cold is tremendous
then at one point a pickup truck came and told all of us
get on now however you can
at that moment I was still in good shape
I played sports
I played soccer
but with the cold my legs wouldn't respond
get on now
suddenly my legs fell asleep and I asked for 5 minutes to massage my legs because I
couldn't feel them
but they didn't wait for me
they took off
desperate I stood up and started running in the night
I bounced off a wire, sitting on the ground I stayed silent to see if I could hear where the
group was
I started walking until I heard a whistle,
I followed the whistle and it was the group
but there were these little unmanned planes that detected heat
I didn't know if it was the group or the little planes
in the end it was the group
when the men saw me they came to help me
many of the men in the group helped me,
every so often they pulled me along,

or gave me their hand so I wouldn't fall behind
they gave me their hands and I felt the thorns in their hands digging into mine
and the thorns I already had sank in deeper.
cactus thorns
are savage thorns
they bury themselves deeper and deeper in the skin
three months later my body was still oozing the thorns from my legs and my hands
I can still feel some parts of my skin that hold thorns that never came out
the desert is still there
in every pain I remember
all my toenails fell off
they fall off from the friction of so much walking
When we set off walking I put on like three pairs of socks because of the cold
and so my sneakers were very tight
from wearing so many socks
at one point I stood up, after resting, and I felt strange,
I sat back down and took off my sneakers and socks and I had huge blisters under my nails
blisters under the nails, I had never seen anything like it
and the pollero took a thorn and pricked the blister
he told me don't pull out the nail, put your socks on and keep going.
it'll protect your toe anyway.
at the back of the group goes another pollero, with a branch, erasing the footprints we leave
the coyotes, who are the ones who will take us to the other side of the border
come by about twice a week
you have to wait for them in what they call
the desert house
it's a place
there is no house
there is desert
in the desert house there were many days of uncertainty
I saw and saw people pass by nonstop
I saw young people, old people

small, big, white, dark
educated, uneducated
of all sizes, shapes and colors
people nonstop

and all with a face of sadness and fear that could not be hidden
men and women

I was lucky because I got a good coyote

I had been waiting for days in the house, in the middle of the desert, and all the women who came through were taken right away, and I was still there

one day I told the coyote, I want to go now

and he told me, look, mija, I'm not sending you because all I've got is bastards

I don't want to put you in the middle of all of them because I'm afraid they'll do something to you

I came recommended

let's wait for more people to come, more women, and I'll send you

then everyone off to sleep in a room, all of us who were there slept in one room

One day he comes and looks at a bunch of us, makes us stand up, and points at me, and says to me

you, come

let's go buy you some clothes

I'm going to send you by plane

they won't get through

and I ask, why won't they get through?

well, can't you see them?

Do you speak English?

a little

he bought me clothes and we went to the airport

we arrived

-See that black van? that's immigration

-that other one? that too

I got on the plane and arrived

my appearance allowed it.

they got me out by plane,

to get one off their hands quickly and carry on with the rest.
when I came on the flight they called my friend to say he could make the deposit now.
a contact at the destination pays.
it went well for me, I arrived, nobody knows I'm here
I arrived, I showered, when I took off my socks, 3 nails came off.
I arrived in really bad shape, vomiting dust, phlegm with mud, for several days
Forgive me for telling you all this, I had to tell someone
And here you are on your bench, listening to me
It's that everything is born from a question.
Will you listen to me?
Questions demand to be answered.
It is in trying to answer them that we think, speak, act.
A journey. A journey to try to answer a simple question
Where are we going? Where do we come from? Who listens to us
And in that very instant I wonder who will care about my question?
What do you know of my question?
What do you know of me?
Why would you care about my question
Why would you care about me.
Perhaps, before we sink into a sea of unanswered questions, I can give you some certainty.
I have only one,
That we are basted together by an invisible thread that tugs at all of us in every direction.
Perhaps that is my certainty, the notion that there is no solid ground and that one can only
establish light, fragile, momentary ties with people who try to save us or exploit us.
Everything is movement, mist and shipwreck.
There, now you can put back everything you removed from your view, put everything back in
its place, the buildings, the people, the cars, the trees, everything goes back to normal.
Leave the bench, it will be ours forever