

## Pictures Of My Father

*Abou spoke more low,  
But cheerly still; and said, 'I pray thee, then,  
Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'*  
—Leigh Hunt "Abou Ben Adhem"<sup>[1]</sup>

1 In this one  
Daddy's eyes are closed,  
but his mouth is wide open.  
He's smiling. His sheened forehead  
tilted, resting on my hair, but  
his arm, heavy on my shoulder  
betrays his grief over Grandpa Leonardo.

2 In this one  
Daddy's hands are buried  
in the pocket of my black dress.  
He's giving me lime leaf  
to make sure ghosts don't follow me home.  
We're at Uncle Kenrick's grave site, singing,  
*Because He Lives.*

3 In this one  
Daddy's leaning  
into my ears, stammering  
*no mek mine so l-long.*  
There was a lot to say about Uncle Mike,  
to supplement his short life.

4 In this one  
Daddy's at the podium  
reciting a slow and broken  
*Abou Ben Adhem*  
for Uncle Carlos; hoping  
ghosts have ears.

5 In this one  
Daddy's right beside me  
in his confinement period  
awaiting rebirth.  
I hope he can get out when the time comes;  
that santa maria,<sup>[2]</sup> cement and steel  
prove no challenge.  
He must be lying down  
in his new suit.  
The ten of us cannot be sure  
of whom or what is in that box.  
I didn't write a long eulogy.  
The reader is almost finished.  
Spit echoes in the mic.  
I'm seeing a mask falling  
like society,  
and I'm drowning in congealed tears  
clogging my skull.

6 In this one  
I'm dreaming of flood water  
burying the banks of the Caves Branch.<sup>[3]</sup>  
I'm in mud from the waist down,  
holding Daddy's hand  
dry as casham;<sup>[4]</sup> telling him  
*come with me to higher ground,*  
but he's not fighting the current.  
He says,  
*I can't cross the river anymore*  
without pause,  
*but I'm meeting some friends soon.*

7 I wake up wet with worry;  
flip through the albums,  
wondering whose father will be next.

—Blaire Santos

[1] Hunt, Leigh. "Abou Ben Adhem by Leigh Hunt." *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44433/abou-ben-adhem>.

[2] Santa maria is a type of hardwood.

[3] The Caves Branch is a river in Belize.

[4] Casham is a powdery dessert made of corn and sugar

## Love Seat of Grief

I sit on the love seat and watch you experience grief  
For the first time,  
And it pierces your heart like a well-aimed arrow.

We sit apart,  
And I watch from a distance.  
Words fall from your still body,  
Glass eyes stare into the peel green walls.

You are safe inside this unripe fruit.

Your hands move up,  
Over your eyes and  
Fingertips circle down the edge of your jaw.  
Breath and words end,  
The minutes pass between us.

There is poetic irony in acknowledging that grief is a living thing. That something born of death and finality can take root, bloom, and bear such a variety of fruit. It is almost unfathomable that so many eventualities can stem from the same seed, with nature and nurture both factoring into how we tend our emotional gardens and navigate this process.

Grief is perennial – it is enduring, constantly evolving, and the parts of us that survive will inevitably grow into something else. This series of videos and accompanying personal reflections aim to make space for and unpack manifestations of grief experienced by our communities. Whether this takes the shape of honouring the memory of a person or place; discovering the multi-sensorial triggers that soothe or exacerbate loss; reckoning with unresolved contentions; or expanding our definitions of 'ritual' when it comes to mourning; Cousoume Collective offers the participants and audience a space to grapple with tangible and intangible aspects of grief in its myriad of forms through the cathartic and communal act of cooking.

Your voice cracks out the blurring words—  
"These are not regrets, but I wish there was more time."

There are tears,  
Pooling at the red rims of almond shaped eyes.  
They will never fall and  
Your cheeks remain un-anointed by the pouring of your salt.

In the stillness of this ambiguous grief,  
Of controlled breath,  
Steady words,  
Voice – low and calm,  
I watch you from the loveseat and  
I observe you as realise

That the ultimate punishment for love  
Is despair.

— Portia Subran

## Chagrin: Field Notes on Grief Pt. 1

Cha-grin: from the French word for 'grief' or 'sorrow'; a feeling of being vexed, disappointed, or annoyed, especially because of a perceived failure or mistake.

COUSOUMEH  
COLLECTIVE



## Tia B

Tia B had the world—  
TV, stove, fridge, and chamber pot  
all in her bedroom.  
A bearded fan,  
shaking like an old man, remained  
on '3.' day and night.  
Too much commotion to squeeze  
past the door to make her red rose tea  
with condensed milk.

Tia B finally left her room,  
on a gurney  
to the morgue.

At the burying ground  
the casket was closed.  
Didn't want rain to erase her  
dolloped-upped face and hair,

but when the palm bearers plopped  
that mahogany box  
into that dint of mud  
I heard—splash,  
and I still wonder  
if her chamber pot ran over  
and spoilt her  
TV, fridge, and fan.

—Blaire Santos

## Trinidadian Green Seasoning

### Ingredients

5 Cloves of garlic  
8 Leaves of chadon beni  
4 green onions  
1/2 medium onion  
1/4 tsp salt  
1 tbs fresh thyme  
Water

In a food processor add all the ingredients  
and cover with lid.

Pulse the green seasoning mixture until it  
forms a thick paste. If it looks dry add a  
little water to thin it out.

Taste and adjust the seasoning as you see fit  
extra salt extra pepper, etc.

“It's a very pungent smell.  
Your entire house smells like  
green seasoning and I didn't like  
the smell at all.  
But now that I'm an adult and I'm  
on my own,  
it would be borderline  
blasphemous to buy green  
seasoning in the grocery.  
I can't bring myself to,  
and now I love the smell.”

in my sorrow  
i eat fruit more.  
lush melons,  
half ripe plums,  
bananas, just before  
their last day.  
i remind myself that  
all comes from earth  
and returns to it,  
Even love.  
i remind myself that  
all things ripen,  
then rot  
if they are not consumed.

—roanrita