Existential Crisis

I never felt light, the serenity of nature
just heavy with the burden of existence.
Sunshine fried my skin like chicharones.
Allergic, flowers agitated.
Water drowned me once already,
paddles shocking the breath back.
How could I be of use to this earth?
Alien limbs flailing.
A speck of dust in the universe.
Purpose unclear.
Yet each soul has weight,
heft, meant to take up space.
Destined to be more than bone and flesh,
I was gifted this cavernous mind
where words play like schoolchildren
and phrases of empowerment are derived.
Images rattlesnake through clouds
of recollections of hands held, tears dried.
Being the soft bosom to lean on,
when darkness mists my kinfolk
and only my demulcent voice sparks healing.
Firmly rooted, perhaps I am descendant of plants.
Easing the swelling like turmeric.
Boosting the energy like ashwagandha.
Enriching the brain like ginkgo.
My discomfort in the wild stemming from insecurity,
fear of the unpaved, but what is life
if not bursts of unpredictability.

Jasmine Vallejo Love

Jasmine Vallejo-Love is a disabled Afro-Puerto Rican American poet and writer living in Los Angeles. Her work engages with social issues such as mental illness, domestic violence, addiction, and sexual assault. She is a Diana Woods Memorial Award finalist, 2025 Lambda Literary Emerging LGBTQ Voices Fellow, and was selected for PEN America's Emerging Voices workshop and the Tin House workshop. Her work has been anthologized and appears in journals such as Pinch, Lunch Ticket, and Cholla Needles. Engage with her on Instagram @CafecitoWithJas

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