

# **JESUS MAYA**

**THE FALL  
TORONTO  
PANCHO  
RIGHT, MAMA?**

**TRANSLATED BY JEANNINE M. PITAS**

## THE FALL

As a kid I fell from the roof  
in a vain attempt to escape a beating.  
I was trying to reach the roof of the neighbour's house  
as always, tempting fate  
without weighing the consequences.

Mamá, forgive me.

There are times when it seems too late.  
You learn you're free to make  
whatever choices you want.  
But you don't choose the consequences.  
Those hit you whether you like them or not.

Papá, forgive me.

I was trying to hang onto something  
in the air beyond my reach.  
But when you have nowhere to start from  
there's nothing you can do.  
The ground stopped my fall.

Brothers, forgive me.

Someone came to rescue me  
and when I regained consciousness  
I knelt down to plead forgiveness  
(Forgiveness for what?)  
At the same time I was struggling to breathe and a thousand images  
were passing through my mind.

God, forgive me.

The day that Aurorita's son drowned  
she came to our house with the news  
wailing and begging God to not let it be true, her son couldn't  
have been swallowed by the sea.

Later I spoke with his brother  
a witness to the drama.

He told me that he was just two metres away  
and in a split second he saw him rise above the water,  
then dip down again. They were walking,  
their feet touching the ground.  
He sank suddenly, unavoidably.

Dearest love, forgive me.

Who doesn't shake his hands, struggling in vain  
to grab onto something out of reach,  
some nonexistent lifeline?

Dearest friends, forgive me.

The last time I saw a childhood friend  
he'd just come out of prison  
and he had some vague religious feelings.  
He was trying to cling to them and save his life.

Teachers, forgive me.

To save oneself from a downward spiral.  
He'd already lost his family, his job  
his health and dignity...He said,  
"If only my wife would come back, I'd change my ways."  
I felt bad for him,

she'd been fucking around for quite some time  
he was clinging to an illusion.

Boss, forgive me.

One time on TV I saw  
people jumping out the window,  
escaping the fire  
gesticulating wildly as their fall  
accelerated more and more  
until they crashed into the pavement.

This is how I saw myself all that time  
clinging to your memory...  
held up by the thousand images of the past  
that doesn't exist anymore.  
But I can't sustain myself on them,  
not while I keep falling faster.

But I've already buried all this – I did it yesterday.  
Forgive me...But you can all go to hell.

## TORONTO

Last night I dreamed  
that we were painting  
with ocean blue  
acrylics

I dreamed that we were painting  
cutting the borders  
rolling the walls.

With Windex we cleaned  
a few drops  
that had fallen  
to the rubber floor.

The aroma  
reminded me of you,  
the exhaustion of my job...

I dreamed we were no longer in Mexico  
and that we were not among  
the 72 murdered men and women  
in Tamaulipas.

That we pinched our own flesh, relieved  
that we were not among those 72  
or those 400 that fall every year  
nor those thousands who are now just specks on the sea.  
Arizona is one mere segment of the news.

I dreamed that you and I might actually fit in here,  
that we weren't just plopped down here in Toronto.

Blood, tears,  
and many fears  
run through us.  
And we feel so much pain,  
the kind that doesn't go away  
ever.

## PANCHO

To paint the kitchen Mexican pink  
the living room bright blue, bringing joy to each homecoming  
the other bedroom bottle-green  
and ours, the colour of earth

To paint a house, to have a home  
and to dream of other things  
some joyous reunion  
some forgiveness  
an embrace

The Guernica painting, masks,  
pictures, a jacket, hats  
To have work, vacations  
To see the dentist often  
Get your usual check-up

To feel certain  
That there won't be a raid  
(In Canada the "migra" doesn't exist).

To walk through the streets  
To ask a police officer anything,  
absolutely anything...  
or to go and tell them how you got paid  
with a bad check.

Maybe it all comes down to having a home  
I won't say that I need to own it  
I just want a place to feel at home.

To dream of the moments  
that build up our lives -  
these moments that make us stand firm  
always.

## **RIGHT, MAMÁ?**

Mamá...

Now you don't have to be afraid of gangs  
You don't have to worry.  
When night falls, I'm at home  
waiting for you to come back from work.

Mamá, the cycle has been broken!  
Your son won't have to experience  
the pain your past generations endured.

Mamá, I won't have to be a farmer.  
Mamá, I won't be a stumbling drunk.  
Mamá, I won't be another ghetto Indian!

Mamá, I'll be able to go to university.  
Mamá, we'll eat red meat.  
Mamá, over here no one gets high on glue!

Mamá, here you won't have to worry  
about finding me in a pool of blood.

Mamá, isn't it true  
that no one will be bothered that I'm Latino?  
They don't have the "migra" here, right?  
Aren't the police colourblind?  
No one's going to rat on us, right?

Isn't it true that your coworkers don't ask you about your status?  
And your roommate is trustworthy?  
And everything is going to work out just fine?  
Isn't it true that here people only approach you in good faith?  
Aren't most people here good?

Mamá,  
We've just been hearing made-up rumours, right?  
Aren't we just imagining things?  
When you leave your job, you'll be able to go back, right?  
Immigration officials don't come into coffee shops, right?

Doesn't the Prime Minister understand what it means to start from nothing?  
Mamá, don't they pay fair wages here?  
Don't employment agencies care about our safety?  
Aren't people aware that we immigrants fill the factories?  
Don't they know who built their houses?  
Aren't we immigrants more complex forms of life?  
We're not the ambassadors of dirty, corrupt, hungry, dangerous countries!

If you marry for love, everything will fall into place, right?  
You hear plenty of good news, right?  
Because there's a lot of good news! Isn't there?  
God sees everything that happens, right?  
...And if we place our lives in his care, how can anything go wrong?

Aren't people lying when they say corruption is legal here?  
Isn't it true that if you're no longer with me, the world won't come to an end?  
It can't be the case that turning people in is encouraged and rewarded.  
Aren't our people united, helping one another?

So, Mamá, is nothing really true?  
Is everything just a lie?  
You're not going to cry, right?  
We're going to miss each other?  
This is all just a dream, right?  
A bad dream?

We're just living in a bad dream, right?  
Aren't we more than a couple of silly dreamers?