

The poems in this collection represent the ways women perceive themselves in different situations. Basic to this is the establishment of our identity which we can uncover by answering the question: Who Am I? The fundamental knowledge of who we are is relevant and vital in all of our daily doings and interactions.

UNRAVELING

Poems by Mildred Santiago-Vélez

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10602.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.



UNRAVELING

Poems by

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

Copyright © Mildred Santiago-Vélez

ISBN: 978-1-64438-086-4

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2019

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Santiago-Vélez, Mildred

Unraveling by Mildred Santiago-Vélez

POETRY/American/Hispanic American | FICTION/Women | SELF

HELP/Personal Growth/Self-Esteem

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019913334

CONTENTS

1. IDENTITY UNFOLDING	9
Identity	10
Immortal Woman	13
I Must Unmask	15
Woman I Am	16
<i>Idioma</i> /Language	19
Latina	21
Ser Madre.....	22
To Be Strong.....	24
The Woman in the Mirror	26
Looking Glass.....	28
2. LIFE EVOLVING	31
The Path	32
Revelation	33
Trees and Life	34
Rain.....	35
Unbridled	36
Awareness.....	37
Life Lessons.....	38
Let Me Live	40
Backbone	41
Sunset Promises	42
Transition.....	44
Forgiveness.....	46
Want Ad, Unclassified.....	47
Enlightenment.....	49
3. RELATIONSHIPS... UNTANGLING	51
White Elephant	52
I Know Him	54
Broken Promises, Broken Ties	55
Phone Call.....	57
Life, Love & Time	59
Tell Me.....	61
Perhaps Then	62
A Life Worth Living	63
4. REALITY SHIFTING.....	65
Driftwood.....	66

I Am My Father's Daughter	68
My Inner Child	69
Dreaming and Waiting	71
Hidden Anguish	72
Empty Nest	73
Daydreaming	75
New Mother	77
My Secret World	78
Dare	80
It's Time	81
Pondering Life	82
She's The One	84
What is Love?	86
For You	87
5. DEATH AND DEPARTING.....	89
The Angels Came	90
My Plea	91
Immortality.....	93
Our Song of Love.....	95
No Goodbyes.....	96
"Where, oh Death, is Your Victory?" *	97
Who?	98
Legacy.....	99
Mother.....	101
6. REMINISCING AND RECONCILING.....	105
Looking Back	106
Carousel Horse	108
Slamming Doors	109
Sometimes.....	111
I Wonder	112
Memories	114
Childhood Remembrances	115
Safe Haven	117
Weaving Past and Present	119

1. IDENTITY UNFOLDING

*“You get older
and you are a whole mess of things,
new thoughts, sorry feeling,
big plans, enormous doubts,
going along hoping and getting disappointed,
over and over again,
no wonder I don't recognize
my little crayon picture.
It appears to be me,
and it is not.”*

Virginia Euwer Wolff, True Believer

Identity

To know who we are,
is to know our history.
To understand why we speak the way we do,
is to know our past.
To decipher why we dance the way we do,
and why we love the way we do, or
why we eat the foods we do,
is to know our roots.

I dug here and there trying to find my roots
and uncovered them
in the Caribbean island of Boriquén,
at one time the land of the brave,
home to the Taino people.
Peaceful, hospitable, generous, soft-spoken people
who lived in harmony, united by language
and spiritual beliefs, all within a social order.
A distinct culture, I would say,
certainly not savages.

Peace & tranquility abruptly ended
when the Spaniards arrived in search of riches.
The placid, brave people fought & resisted
but soon were ravaged by those who claimed
superior stance and culture.
The Taino men were decimated, the women
forcefully taken by white Spaniards.
Over time a new order, a new society came to be.

The hunt for gold and riches ended,
another wave of Spaniards settled the island.
This time they came to farm and work hard;
they married their own and the mestizos too.
Their Spanish language dominated,
but not all was lost, rather,
the ways & doings of two cultures
were wondrously, though painful at times,

interwoven, slowly
moving toward a new world culture.

The evolution did not end.
The need for laborers was great,
sugar plantations were growing, and
so it was that free men from African tribes,
Yoruba, Igbo, and Bantu,
were brought to the island against their will;
free men forced into slavery.
Once again, over time, &
in keeping with the ebbs & flows of life,
the Africans too began to marry
Taino & mestiza women;
another strong culture was
now mingling & mixing with
the already complex people of Boriquén.
It was inevitable, history in the making,
the evidence is palpable.
African cultural practices,
words & beliefs are integral components
of our now compounded island nation
known as Puerto Rico.

Who am I?
A product of my interwoven past
with a language enriched by many &
a culture, diverse & abounding, that
makes up the colorful,
at times complex
mosaic of my identity.
I am not Taina,
I am not Spaniard,
I am not African.
I am a fusion of these,
unique & whole.
Their roots are in my blood,
their history imbues my existence.

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

I am Puerto Rico and
its complex, unique composition.
I am New York,
another amalgam of cultures.
Who am I?
Be it known that most of all,
I am a Latina of the Americas.

Immortal Woman

Ever since prehistoric times
Woman has been dragged, pushed, pulled,
belittled, enslaved, raped, disregarded, & discarded;
her wild seed trampled.
Neither time nor history has changed
Woman's destiny of subjugation.
Receiver of seeds, willingly or unwillingly,
procreator of sons,
keeper of unnatural rhythms.

Ever since prehistoric times
Woman has struggled, resisted, defied, deserted,
endured, & transcended;
blossomed wildly, unexpectedly.
Even so,
Strong Woman has barely modified
time & history,
destiny & unnatural laws.

Ever since prehistoric times
Woman has been receiver of
instinctual wisdom,
compassionate giver of self,
mirror of daughters,
mother who nurtures &
encourages freedom, yet also
guards natural boundaries
with discernment & tenacity.

Ever since prehistoric times,
Woman has been sagacious, steadfast,
brave & compassionate
maiden, mother, grandmother,
matriarch, wise & empowered Crone,
no matter destiny,
no matter history,
no matter time & laws,

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

no matter the predators,
Strong Woman,
Immortal Woman
has prevailed.

I Must Unmask

To find meaning in my life,
I must unmask.
I know that,
but I'm afraid.
Afraid of not knowing what to do
with that embedded self,
afraid of creating chaos
in a seemingly orderly life.

The struggle is strong within,
I experience it in my bones,
a hidden self I must contend with
is trying to make sense,
wanting to surface,
afraid to emerge.

It is a lonely, painful unfolding,
yet powerful and instinctive.
It is a forceful yearning
which keeps me wanting to uncover,
to uncover the me who knows,
the one who is.

The process has begun,
there is no turning back.
Intuitive woman is resurrecting;
free, unconditional, intense, unfeigned,
vital woman is alive.
Come, I await you.
Come, I need embrace you.

Woman I Am

How do I describe myself?
How different am I today
from who I was yesterday?
I know I have changed,
everything changes,
nothing remains the same.
nothing is permanent.
Nonetheless,
I revel in my reality,
I am a woman.

A woman
who once was an infant
with curly, brown hair
and a great big pink bow
that insistently slid off.
Then, like magic,
I was a young child
who wore pink & white
dresses with frills & lace,
sewn with love by mother.

Almost too soon,
I became a young girl
who dreamt about love
but couldn't understand
how a stranger could
truly love her,
yet it happened.
In time I became a wife,
then a mother who
experienced the love of a man,
the love of her children &
the joys & pains that
accompany life's events.

Unraveling

Today, I am a woman
who has learned about
love's ups & downs,
how to be alone at times &
who values moments of happiness,
moments to celebrate,
no matter fears & doubts,
no matter losses & hurts.

I am a woman
who goes about the days
accomplishing her tasks,
yet also questioning
life & living,
death & departure,
her place in the universe,
even the will of God,
albeit, always believing
in His love.

Woman.

Woman.

Woman.

There is so much more to me
than gender.

I am
Love, Fear, Dependence,
Independence, Endurance,
Happiness, Kindness
Anger, Tears,
Frustrations,
Questions,
Vitality,
Resilience,
Spirituality.

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

I am
Nurturing
Trusting
Giving,
Evolving,
Woman
I am.

Idioma/Language

I think of words,
phrases, sentences,
exclamations!
Spanish/English
English/Spanish.
Mis idiomas/my languages,
my being/*mi ser.*
More than words,
phrases, or sentences,
language
is at the very core
of my existence.
Without language
my life would be
like a dam,
repressed
with thoughts,
emotions, wishes,
& dreams
unable to flow freely;
a prisoner
of my own self,
wanting to burst forth.

Language/*Idioma,*
more than words,
phrases, or sentences,
are my two worlds.
At times integrated,
separate when needed,
yet both permeating my life
with thoughts & emotions.
I dream in English
of a perfect world.
I make love in *español,*
mi amor, querido amor.
I write in English,

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

words flowing onto paper.

I cook in *español*...
ajo, cilantro, orégano,
herbs that have flavored
our foods for generations.

Language defines me,
language frees me,
language strengthens me.
Mis idiomas/my languages,
two languages,
two cultures,
one person.

Unraveling

Latina

Latina,
The island travels with you
wherever you go;
laughter,
vibrant colors,
warm smiles,
rich skin,
swaying hips.

Latina,
The island travels with you
wherever you go;
perpetual stereotypes,
harassment,
sexual innuendos,
menial jobs.

Hermanas Latinas,
this myth,
this old, pervasive myth
needs be overthrown,
transformation achieved,
belief in the power of self,
Educación,
Paciencia,
Persistencia,
Superación.

hermanas – sisters
educación education
persistencia – persistence
superación - overcome

Ser Madre

¿Saben?

Cuando era niña soñaba,
soñaba con ser madre.

Soñaba que mis hijos serían buenos e inteligentes,
soñaba que mis hijos serían obedientes,
y que me amarían mucho.

Un día, cuando ya no era niña,
llegó un joven a mi vida,
llegó el hombre que pensé sería el mejor padre,
y juntos soñamos.

Al pasar los años, llegaron esos hijos tan deseados,
uno muy bonito y sensible,
otro muy inteligente y querendón,
y aun otro muy alegre y saltarín.

¿Saben?

Aunque a veces se tornaban un tanto desafiantes,
o quizás hasta un poco engreídos,
todos fueron muy queridos,
todos fueron bienvenidos.
ellos hicieron mi sueño realidad,
ser madre.

Igual que yo, mis hijos crecieron,
soñaron sus propios sueños,
y se fueron a convertirlos en realidad.

Es la ley de la vida, según dicen.

Y hoy, después de tanto vivir,
después de tanto soñar,
estoy sola otra vez... pero....

¿Saben?

Sigo siendo madre.

No importa donde estén,
no importa con quien estén,
no importa si me llaman o no,
no importa si me visitan o no,
siguen siendo mis hijos.

Unraveling

Cada día que vivo, pienso en ellos.
Cada día que vivo, los amo más.
Cada día que vivo, hago oración por ellos.
Y así será siempre, todos los días,
hasta que esta mi vida terrenal culmine,
Madre, siempre seré madre.

To Be Strong

Over the ages,
the image of woman
as the weaker gender
has been perpetuated.
She needs protection,
they say,
she cannot do for herself,
they say,
she is unable to decide,
she needs to submit to man,
they say,
he is stronger.

What does it mean to be strong?
Does it mean physical strength?
Does it mean violence? Aggressiveness?
Does it mean to be devoid of emotions
as if wearing an invisible armor
that hides all feelings?

Woman, to be strong is to
withstand and overcome
the predicaments &
disappointments that life brings.

To be strong is to be
courageous and go forward
in spite of hostility or
intimidation.

To be strong is
not to allow misguided,
unfounded judgments
dictate your decisions or behavior.

To be strong is
not to accept the myth that you, woman,
are weak and powerless,
unable to make decisions,
unable to stand firm.

Unraveling

Woman,
recognize that you are strong.
You have great courage,
you are nurturing, giving,
intelligent & intuitive.
You are strong because you
love & have tolerance.
You are strong because
you have respect for others.
You are strong because
when you need to cry, you do,
and then continue going forward.
Woman,
know who you are,
respect yourself,
accept your strengths,
conquer unfounded fears,
stand tall.

The Woman in the Mirror

When I look in the mirror
I see a woman with
expressive, golden brown eyes,
fair skin, & enticing smile.
I see a wife & mother who
has so much love to give.
I also see a professional,
one who works hard &
is climbing the proverbial
corporate ladder.
Then I ask myself:
Why is it that in spite of all
my qualities & achievements,
there are times when thoughts
of unworthiness creep into
my mind and tell me that
I'm not good enough?

It is on those days that I
can only see a person who is
misunderstood, unloved & flawed.
The inner connection is broken,
the dense fog of unworthiness,
creeps in, holds on to me,
tight & unrelenting, causing
frustration, anxiety, inadequacy,
almost total breakdown.
The image of perfection
I try so hard to achieve fades,
self-judgment is harsh.

Then, like the miracle of nature
that dissipates early morning fog
through gentle, warm winds &
a sun that shines strong & unswerving,
the voices of self-criticism & censorship
are silenced.

Unraveling

I listen to my heart.
I choose to dwell on love & self-respect.
The fog lifts.
When I look in the mirror,
once again I see the woman I am,
courageous, grateful, persistent, loving.
I have imperfections, but they are
minimized when I accept them as
part of my humanity.
Once again I continue my quest
for a satisfying, well rounded life,
a life that is evolving.
Once again,
the woman in the mirror is well.

Looking Glass

Sometimes I see my world
through a glass, a glass of
Merlot, that is.
The world seems less complex,
sweeter & smoother,
even balanced.
Other times it's a glass of
Pinot Noir.
Those are the times
I feel a bit fickle,
thin skinned & susceptible,
especially susceptible to those
who inhabit my surroundings
by unwarranted association.
My entire existence pales and
seems washed out when
looking through this glass.

Now, truth be told,
the glass I enjoy the most
is the one with Cabernet Sauvignon,
from Bordeaux of course.
Its intensity, backbone and
notable structure infuses courage.
I especially enjoy the subtle,
almost imperceptible oak flavor
that causes me to feel strong &
capable of living my life.

Thus,
no matter my surroundings or
the winds of hurricane force or
the days of grey clouds,
I continue to stand tall, for
each day brings with it

Unraveling

a different glass, my looking glass,
which befittingly reconciles me
with the uncertain world I inhabit &
provides a distinctive,
uncommon, satisfying view.

2. LIFE EVOLVING

“Look around you. Everything changes. Everything on this earth is in a continuous state of evolving, refining, improving, adapting, enhancing...changing. You were not put on this earth to remain stagnant.”

Steve Maraboli, Life, the Truth, and Being Free

The Path

From the moment we are born,
until we take our last breath,
we embark on an unpredictable journey
that takes us step by step from road to road,
through treacherous ups & downs,
around dark bends,
across peaceful plateaus.

Sometimes the way is pleasant & gratifying,
other times distressing, even painful,
but we continue walking.

Sometimes we move with determination,
perhaps driven by our dreams & expectations;
other times we move in fear & distrust
as we come upon paths that are obliged,
with no detours or returns in sight.

Helpless, we stand by, watching
as some of our dreams fall by the wayside,
requiring we reconfigure, change direction,
and begin anew.

It is then that we dare question the Cartographer,
we want to know why...why?...why?

There is no explanation.

Still, no matter our dreams and realities,
no matter the unexpected, or the disappointments,
deep within we find the will to continue on our way,
impelled by a force beyond our understanding.

Finally, we know.

We accept that till we breathe our last breath,
it is our path, ours alone,
no one else can walk it for us.

Revelation

Go ahead, write that poem,
wield words, conjure pictures,
paint your thoughts in vibrant colors,
open your eyes to that mythic self,
unmask your deepest passions.

Go ahead, write that poem,
ink those thoughts you hold within,
make explosions, purge your secrets,
make plain your confusions,
evoke tranquility.

Go ahead, write that poem,
dare to denude your veiled beliefs,
make sense of life, yours and mine,
liberate that imprisoned self,
taste the power of redemption.

Go ahead, write that poem,
you need to know you,
I need to know me.

Trees and Life

Trees are majestic creatures
whose roots dig deep into earth
in search of sustenance,
balance... life.
Above the ground their trunks,
over time,
grow wide & tall,
as if to flaunt strength
and claim
an honorable place in nature.
Its branches reach out into the sky,
seemingly in search of wisdom and,
as the seasons come & go,
they reflect the bareness
of necessary solitude,
only to be followed
by bursting green leaves
that proclaim the beauty of life.
And then, in time,
we witness with awe the synchronized
transformation of its leaves;
orange, yellow, and red leaves,
visible agents of change.

Oh magnificent trees that teach us
how at times our own lives
need be lived in necessary solitude,
with brief interludes of bountiful living,
followed by crucial, perhaps painful
passages of change,
of necessary death & renewal.
Only then can we,
from season to season,
dig deep within and
recalibrate our lives,
knowing that therein lies
our wisdom, honor, and strength.

Rain

Morning rises on cloudy skies,
Rain falls... falls...falls...
flows freely,
cleansing, purifying,
washing away unwanted decay,
washing away rootless impurities.

Lluvia cae...cae...cae...
pours on dry, parched ground
fortifying,
impelling creative forces,
growth and change.

Rain falls...falls...falls...
into my soul,
nostalgia surfaces,
memories of bygone loves,
regrets & sorrows,
unspoken words
well up &
 f l o w a w a y.

Rain...rain...rain...
fall into my life,
wash away my indifference,
wash away my angers,
wash away my fears.
Lluvia suave, lluvia fresca,
fall...fall...fall...
into my soul,
permeate the obscure,
purge every corner,
help me rise
to face my destiny.

lluvia = rain cae = fall suave = soft fresca = fresh

Unbridled

Time flies.

A phrase I'm sure we say and often hear,
almost as if by saying it,
we can control its hurried pace,
adjust it to our speed, moods & quirks.

Yet deep within we know it's true,
time does not stand still,
time flies...unbridled,
and with it, we fly too.

Think about it.

We go through many changes,
reinvent old patterns & establish new ones.
It seems we are
always trying to keep up with time,
yet almost never getting ahead.

Time flies,
and with it, we continue moving
in our quest to discover, or perhaps
uncover new beginnings,
put closure on unwanted endings.

Think about it.

Maybe, just maybe, we could become
ageless & timeless explorers
who continue to dream &
ignore the should haves and what ifs.
Is it possible that we can find within
the strength to embrace new roles & visions,
to create a renewed self,
one who does not fear the threat of time?
Remember,
whether we dream new dreams or not,
whether we move on with passion or not,
one truth remains certain,
time flies...unbridled.

Awareness

Surrendering to our present circumstances
is not cowardice or conformity,
it is the realization that life is not perfect
and is always in movement.

Surrendering to our present circumstances
is to understand that at times
feeling sad or frustrated is
because we have delayed our dreams,
because we feel trapped by our
socially assigned obligations,
credos instilled in us at a tender age
that seem to constrain & limit.

Perhaps surrendering is not the right word
and in its place we need to say
awareness.

Awareness of our present moment
implies mindfulness & perseverance
fused with the knowledge
that life is not perfect,
that it is always in movement.

Awareness is knowing
that this, our present moment,
whether pleasant or disconcerting,
is not permanent.

Awareness is knowing that
the challenges & experiences lived
provide us with
direction & fulfillment and,
from time to time,
contentment.

Awareness is knowing and believing
we have nothing to regret because
life is not perfect and
is always in movement.

Life Lessons

I remember a song from long ago,
when I was a gullible thirteen year old.
It declared I had a destiny
that was my only happiness.
Back then it was one of my favorites.
Today, I ask,
Destiny? What is destiny?
What about free-will?
What about my ability and
right to make choices?

When I was young,
those thoughts did not concern me,
I lived a life I thought was free,
it didn't matter that I was part of
a larger, more powerful existence
governed by my parents.
Choices were made for me,
consequences shared or mitigated,
and in exchange, I felt safe.
I was an important piece,
or so I imagined,
of the puzzle called family

The years went by and at long last
I began to emerge out of my
protective shell of family,
cultural and gender boundaries,
risking the disapproval of my caretakers
and the warm comfort of home.
I realized that that which defined me,
in some ways also limited me.
I knew that the time had come,
I had to make my own way,
and so I did.

Unraveling

Today, as I take inventory,
I realize without doubt that
there will always be surprises,
good or bad.
I have learned that
even though I may not control
every twist and turn,
I still have a choice,
I can choose how to respond.
And so, I ask,
Is it destiny transcendent,
or is it unrivaled free-will?
I choose to believe that
life is a blending of both,
working and weaving
the way together, as one.
I am compelled to find and
accept my place
in this exciting, unpredictable,
at times inexplicable world,
while upholding a sense of self,
after all, it is my life.

Let Me Live

Dear conscience, be my guide,
not my prison guard.
Show me the way,
point out what is right,
what is wrong,
then step aside,
let me decide.
Let me take the risks of choices,
let me learn about consequences,
let me be me.

Dear conscience, don't
cause me to feel guilty,
I need to feel free,
to not worry or fear.
I need to trust myself,
to find a place
that appeases my quest,
perhaps somewhere
between right & wrong.

Dear conscience, I'm not
asking you to leave,
I'm asking you to walk beside me.
Prod me, but don't corral me;
be a gentle reminder,
respect my decisions,
I need to uncover my truth,
I need to live my life.

Unraveling

Backbone

Life is endlessly evolving.
We tread on territory
that at times seems
logical, anticipated, inevitable.
Yet there are times when life
is unexpected, daunting,
so confusing.
It is then that love,
only love,
makes those moments bearable,
even comprehensible.
Yes, love,
the backbone of life
that kindles courage,
will-power,
destination,
well-being.
It is the strong, constant,
unconditional love
that assures,
that gives meaning
and purpose to life.
In the end,
to sense, to know
that there is
one person, just one,
who makes evident
a love so deep
is to know that
life is good.

Sunset Promises

It is true that
I've experienced pain,
I've experienced suffering,
yet, it is also true that
even when those dark moments
seemed to defeat me,
I experienced love,
a love that has allowed me to
endure pain & sadness,
to live moments
of laughter & joy.

Yes, we all have had our share of
pain & suffering,
but in the midst of those experiences,
we need to step back
and contemplate the entire scene,
like when we admire a painting
by Van Gogh or Monet.
Breathtaking landscapes of sunsets
in yellow, red, and orange,
reminiscent of endings, of
letting go of our sadness, or
letting go of that we love
for the sake of survival.
Upon a closer look,
it seems that those well-known
paintings, in one way or another,
reflect a soft, diffused light,
somewhere...in the background,
a light that promises a new day,
perhaps brighter, happier,
a new beginning...sunrise.

Unraveling

And so it is that
no matter the dark foreboding clouds,
the red, menacing skies,
the descending orange sun,
there is always a soft light that prevails,
a light sustained by love & hope,
unwavering & unconditional.

Transition

Transition.

A word that compels us to meditate
on how we have journeyed through life;
from one stage to another,
from one path to another,
sometimes serenely,
other times in turbulence;
sometimes unconsciously,
other times with mindfulness.

Transition.

The metamorphosis of those who
go forward with great expectations
and courage on a journey that
at times is so demanding.
It is the progression of those
who are sustained by a force
that is greater than theirs.
It is the movement of those who
decidedly re-examine old ways,
push boundaries,
create new patterns,
thereby opening doors
to greater experiences & changes,
understanding that life's transitions
will challenge ingrained notions
as well as provide an
interconnectedness with unforeseen,
unknown dimensions.

Transition.

A word that impels us to move on,
knowing that the new & unfamiliar
way that lies before us
needs to be walked
with strength & determination;

Unraveling

knowing that nothing lasts forever
and that our lives,
from beginning to end,
will always be in transition.

Forgiveness

To forgive is to let go,
let go of an offense, a betrayal,
hurtful words & actions
thrown at me by another,
sometimes trusted,
considered a friend,
perhaps even loved.

To forgive is to let go,
let go of the pain another has caused
without provocation, without reason,
making it so much more difficult
because I cannot understand why,
why is that person
so hateful, so heartless.

To forgive is to let go & understand
that holding on to an offense
hurts and causes me
to feel sad & bitter,
perhaps even unworthy.

To forgive is to let go & understand
I cannot change the offender.
Rather, I need to go deep inside
and mend my lacerated heart.
I need to wash away
any lingering feelings of
anger, indignation, or revenge.

To forgive is to let go & know
that everything has an end...
words, feelings...even others.
To forgive & let go is
to find peace within.

Want Ad, Unclassified

Wanted!

Someone who is friendly,
and compassionate,
who likes to talk.

Wanted!

Someone who has
contagious gladness &
is able to make me smile,
even if I don't feel like it.

Wanted!

Someone who listens
to what I have to say &
then hugs me in response,
even if he doesn't agree,
or understand.

Wanted!

Someone who will sit by me &
hold me when I am sad,
no questions asked,
no explanations required.

Wanted!

Someone who will share with me
his love of life,
his fresh and uplifting thoughts
on that which weighs me down.

Wanted! Wanted! Wanted!

Someone to walk with me on
this unknown, adventurous &
sometimes treacherous
road called life.

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

Most important,
that someone must be willing
to hold my hand &
never let go.

Enlightenment

Lightning struck!
Unbound
by high voltage,
I'm learning to love myself,
finding my voice
in an energized,
mood lifting
euphoria
never before experienced.
Inferiority complex,
mind clutter & unwarranted fears
lobotomized
(lightning has been known to do that).
Now I know,
I finally know,
it's so clear.
There are no right answers,
just life, my unique life;
at times imploding
or even exploding,
but most important,
always evolving,
transcending.

5. DEATH AND DEPARTING

“Serenity is the balance between good and bad, life and death, horrors and pleasures. Life is, as it were, defined by death. If there wasn’t death of things, then there wouldn’t be any life to celebrate.”

Norman Davies

The Angels Came

The day the angels came
was a fine summer day;
the sun shone bright,
the sky seemed bluer than ever before,
the billowy clouds danced to & fro.

The day the angels came,
I was not altogether surprised,
I knew deep down inside
that one day they would come,
even though I wished & prayed they would not.

The day the angels came
became for me a cold & bitter day,
a day of darkness, a day of agony & despair,
for on that day, on that fateful day,
my own sweet angel-child was taken from me,
away, far away to her celestial home.

Yes, I remember it well,
it was on that day,
the day the angels came.

Unraveling

My Plea

Dear God,
Are you there?
Are you listening to me?
Hear my prayer.
I need you to make my child well.
Please,
don't let him die.

Dear God,
I want my child by my side.
I want to read him bedtimes stories.
I want to see him ride a bike and
run around screaming & hollering
with other kids just like him.
I want to see him go off to kindergarten,
first grade, and then keep on going
all the way through college.
I want to hear him hound me for my car
when he gets his driver's license.
I want to lose sleep over him
when he's late getting home.
I want to see him tackle his first job.
I want to hear him say, "I love you, Mom."
I even want to hear his angers & disagreements.
I want to watch him fall in love & marry,
though it means he will go away.
I want to see my grandchildren.
I want to see how the life that began inside of me
evolves & blossoms fully into a life that is free,
yet somehow reflects a part of me.

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

Dear God,
Are you there?
Hear my cry.
Please,
Don't let him die.
Don't deny us
our life together.

Immortality

There is an emptiness
deep, deep, down
inside of me
that no one,
no thing,
no belief
can ever fill.

It is that space
my first born child filled,
deep, deep, down
inside of me.

it is that space
where she was formed,
it is that space
where she evolved,
so mysteriously, so securely,
so wonderfully.

it is that space
my firstborn child left
the day she emerged
into this world.

That day was one
that celebrated love and life,
a day in which fear and pain
magically faded when this,
my firstborn child,
was snugly placed
in my warm and loving arms.

Oh round, cherubic face,
Oh soft, curly hair,
I looked at her and saw myself,
she was my immortality.

Many a night I dreamt
of how our lives would be,
of love, of joy,
of giving, of receiving,
and yes, of angers and

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

frustrations too.
Yet those envisionments
remained just that,
futile dreams
of what might have been,
dreams denied me by fate,
if you wish,
and in their place remains
an eternal emptiness,
deep, deep, down
inside of me
that no one,
no thing
no belief
can ever,
ever fill.

Our Song of Love

When I am dead, my dearest,
sing a song of love for me,
plant daisies & sunflowers galore
till they fill the meadow
by our home and then,
every time you look at them,
hum our song of love.
Please do not be sad, but rather,
smile and remember me.
I will be the rain
coaxing the flowers to grow,
I will be the sun,
causing them to bloom,
I will be the wind,
dancing to and fro.
If you do this, my dearest,
I promise you,
our song of love will never die.

No Goodbyes

You left without a warning,
so quickly, quietly,
bewildering to me.
There was no time to talk,
no time to comprehend,
no time to say goodbye.

So many times before,
we laughed, we cried,
talked seriously or jokingly
about that hounding final moment
which came so furtively,
no time to say goodbye.

Perhaps your peaceful, sudden flight
was just the way you wanted;
perhaps you sensed goodbyes to be
enduring and decisive, so,
we need not say goodbye.

You left without a warning,
you went ahead of me.
Someday I know I'll see you,
we'll talk and laugh again.
At last I understand, my love,
no need to say goodbye.

“Where, oh Death, is Your Victory?” *

Be it known that
only love owes no dues to death.
Be it known that
those who love,
those who are brave in the midst of adversities,
those who are kind, even in the face of callousness,
those who are loyal to themselves and to others
have set a foundation that defies death and oblivion.
Death is not their enemy,
Death does not distress them,
nor does it cause fear or trepidation in their hearts.
Be it known that
those who love and are loved
never die.

“Where, oh death, is your sting?” *

*I Corinthians 15:55

Who?

Who will remember me when I'm gone?
Who will remember
my warm smile and spontaneous laughter,
or my large and probing eyes?
Who will remember
that I cried at the movies
whether the ending was happy or sad,
knowing that I cried for a life so inscrutable,
for a world so perplexing?
Who will remember
my love of books,
my hunger for learning, for understanding
the intricacies of our humanness,
my quest for a place in the universe?
Who will remember
how profoundly I loved my family,
how sincerely I loved my friends,
how intensely I loved a man,
how eternally I loved my children?
Who will remember
my loneliness in the midst of a crowd?
Who will remember
that melancholic, forlorn self
that sporadically surfaced,
in spite of others, in spite of myself?
I ask again and again,
Who?

Who
will
remember
me
when
I'm gone?

Unraveling

Legacy

You are gone!
Just like that!
Quietly, serenely, decisively,
knowing your destination.

So many times before
during your long,
drawn out illness,
we thought about it,
spoke about it,
imagined it,
but now it's done.
You are gone.
The piercing pain of loss
breaks our spirit.

It is done.
You are gone.
But...then again,
not completely.
A part of you lives on
in each one of us.
You are present
in that discerning smile,
unfaltering walk,
and persuasive talk.
You are present
in how we view life,
in how we live life,
in how we share life.
Yes...for many,
you are gone,
but not for us.
The essence of who you were
remains.

Mildred Santiago-Vélez

That's your legacy.
How comforting to know,
Dad,
you are still with us.

Mother

For days and hours I sat next to Mother's
hospital bed watching her breathe.
At times I touched her forehead,
her hands, so warm, yet,
with each breath she took,
the end of her life was approaching.

I remembered she would tell stories
of growing up on a farm
along with many brothers and sisters.
As the eldest, she helped care for them;
She did what she could,
given the circumstances.

Once she told me she learned how to
cook at a very young age,
so young that she had to stand on a
wooden crate to reach the large,
hot pots filled with boiling water and
vianda, tubers that were staples at
the dinner table.

Most of their clothes were handmade,
so she learned how to sew and did it well.
She also learned how to embroider
handkerchiefs to help her mother
earn extra money for store-bought necessities
like kerosene for the lamps, or shoes
for the young ones to wear
when they walked to school.
Mother did what she could,
given the circumstances.

As the young and beautiful girl that
she was with large brown eyes
and long wavy dark hair,
she fell in love with a handsome

neighboring fellow, but soon
it became a forbidden love.
He is a womanizer, they said,
he will make you unhappy, they said.
And so, though heartbroken, she left him.
She did what was expected of her,
given the circumstances.

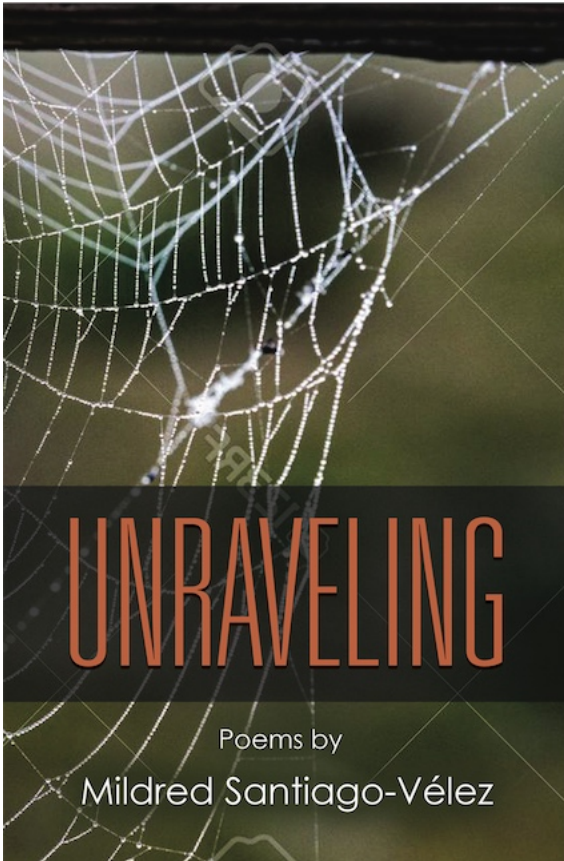
Soon after and not very willingly,
she left her family at the farm and
arrived in Brooklyn. They said it was
to help provide for them, but
she knew it was to establish distance
between her and her first love,
to help her forget,
something I know is not always possible.

Then, months after her arrival and
because life insists on moving along,
she was introduced to another young man,
one who met with family approval.
She was advised and prodded
into a marriage with the one
she did not love.
I suppose she did what was expected,
given the circumstances.

Over the years and perhaps to her surprise,
she discovered her husband truly was
a good man, a God-fearing man who
was kind, generous, and even loving.
She accepted her role as wife and mother,
perhaps at times in a not so pleasant manner,
but she did the best she could,
given her circumstances.

Unraveling

As I contemplate her today,
slowly slipping away,
what I know and remember
about her life comes to mind
and I can't help but wonder,
was she ever happy?
You know, those fleeting moments
of pure joy and well-being we
experience when we share our lives
with those we love.
Did she ever feel loved?
Did she?
I hope she did.



The poems in this collection represent the ways women perceive themselves in different situations. Basic to this is the establishment of our identity which we can uncover by answering the question: Who Am I? The fundamental knowledge of who we are is relevant and vital in all of our daily doings and interactions.

UNRAVELING

Poems by Mildred Santiago-Vélez

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10602.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.