

# **AUNT CHLOE**

## **A Journal of Artful Candor**

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A Diary of the Generations:  
A Tale of Resilience, of Isolation and Community, of Love.

*Take a trip with this family, who, as the generations pass, write in this diary. In its pages they detail the gruesome end of the world and the hope and love that come at the beginning of a new one.*

*The diary starts at the end, with a girl—or someone like a girl—reflecting on a time and a life that she, thankfully, would never have to experience. The next entry comes from her grandmother, as she discusses the great restoration, a period of healing and cleansing after the definitive end of the old times. Her mother before her lavishes in the miracle of the Birth. Hers before her gives a morbid but optimistic account of the ever-present death that seems to consume their community, and the rest of humanity before that. The last entry is the first entry of the woman who started it all at the end of her world.*

### **The Province of Light - 2264 - x years AD**

In the end, there was only darkness. From the darkness, we were also born.

Before their end, there was fire, there were floods, there was tundra; they were hopeless, they were loveless, they were dying.

When the world went dark, humans were individualistic, selfish, as they always have been; they formed communities out of necessity, out of opportunity, out of obligation; they rarely sought community for comfort, or for lifestyle, and the ones who did are the ones who live now, in the light.

The dark was a culmination of illness, global destruction, and the prioritization of self-preservation. We were born from the dark, and we were also born from the dead. But we cannot have life without death nor can we have light without darkness. From the ashes, from the dirt, from the ice, from the blood, from the sick, from the dying, we were born.

My sisters and I are an anomaly. In the eternal death, we received the gift of life. Some like to say we were chosen for the higher purpose, to restore balance, to bring forth light. Personally, I think we are the regression to the mean, the world is healing itself. We are normality, what humanity always should have been.

I was born in the generation after the period our *amayis* call “the great restoration.” The great restoration signified the true end of the old, and the beginning of this new era, of the Light. The

great restoration died with our grandmothers, thus every embodiment of the old died with the last generation that had even an iota of connection to it. Reflecting on my life, and the effortless joy of it all, the unwavering contentment of my days, I have to think maybe that is for the best.

We no longer have to adhere to the trappings of the mythical norm, we are simply the norm. We simply are.

### **The New Province of the Light - 2187 - x years AD [after darkness]**

Today marks the end of the great restoration, and the beginning of the era of what my sisters are calling “the light.” Though the plans seem fool-proof, I still maintain my reservations about the new ways.

Perhaps we drew too much from the ways of the old, the ways of man. We, the ones who never fully received humanity—may have drawn too much from the Human model. But maybe that’s the skepticism talking. Maybe we didn’t draw enough.

My mother told me what she knew of the old, the tales of her mother and the legacy of death that entrenched and overshadowed her birth. The thought that we would even vaguely model lives led by people who isolated and abandoned the women that I now get to call my sisters is baffling and outrageous, to say the least. My mother says I shouldn’t talk like this, that the only way to make systems that work better than theirs is to remember. That through memory we gain clarity and forgiveness.

I don’t know if I will ever be able to forgive because of the memory of my early childhood, the anniversaries of deaths being more important than our birthdays. The slow relief among the sisters of the province because the death count was evening out, that the birth count was riding. The caution to welcome life into their lives; the caution to welcome light in with it.

Maybe I should ease my own caution, because I know how damning it can feel. The new ways will be better, we all had a hand in writing them. We all had an input in constituting our own realities, and the realities of our daughters. [Though words and worlds they created do not completely die, the patriarchy lies dead with the legacy of the suffering it caused.]

The great restoration is a byproduct of research and conversation, and evoking empathy at all intersections of both. The great restoration is about selective memory, about innovation, community, and cultivating happiness. I truly believe that our daughters will experience life unfettered by despair and suffering, as they deserve. Just as we deserved. As I write this, I look at my child and feel pride to be her Amayi, and pride because she is the light.

### **277 Days After Darkness**

Her name means flight. She defied the way that everyone around us was falling; in the face of adversity, in the face of death, she flew away. Her life signifies flight, and even more than that, she signifies light. She signifies the hope for a new beginning, a bright future.

My daughter—like the other daughters of the light—was born of soil, of sun, of blood, of darkness. We were all sitting at the burial site, calling out, as my mother and father used to call it. It is a ritual that we do weekly to honor the lost and all that they have done to keep us here and keep hope alive. I shed a tear, and suddenly one small green seedling came from the earth. It was the first sign of fresh vegetation that we'd seen in years, since the fourth great drought. I thought about eating it for myself, and telling no one, but I didn't dare act on it. Greed was violent, and the reason why we are where we are today, as a people. Greed is certain death.

Besides, it is woven into the fabric of our community that we share; it's how we keep each other alive, cared for, and comforted in these times of darkness. I carefully scooped the plantling and brought it to the collective place, the place where we all dwelled. I showed it to the elders and they began calling out for resources to nurture our little life.

Nearby, in the clearing, the soil became fertile late that very afternoon. It was as if, miracle after miracle, the callings of my community, my elders, even my late grandmother, were being answered, quickly, in abundance, and all at once. I planted it and stayed with it all night, talking to it, laughing with it, weeping over it until I fell into a dreamless sleep.

When I awoke the following dawn, the seedling had grown into a plant I'd only read about in one of my great grandmother's old books. It was called calathea and, just overnight, it was ready to harvest. Not just enough for me, though. No, there was enough for the whole community to enjoy tenfold. Immediately, I reached out to eat it. A few of us did.

It's been 277 days since then. I know because the sun began to rise again. The moon came and went in cycles. I gave birth to my ray of light yesterday, at the last dusk, and I stare down at her now, not conceived through another person, but instead conceived of love and sacrifice.

To pay homage to my grandmother, without whom we would not have life today, I, and all of the other lucky souls who received life and light today, will not be their mothers; we will be called their Amayi. We hold steadfast the faith and the optimism that the protector will maintain the light as we nurture and maintain this precious life. That we will cherish their lives as ours were not cherished before them. That we will be more than a guardian, or a protector. We will be their friends, their co-governors, their healers. Amayi will be all they can be for their light. Amayi are guardians and companions of the light until we retire into the ground, soon to become light once again. We are one, and for the first time since this journal has been written in, we are at peace.

And at peace, the light guides the way to the future. My light, my Anila guides the path to a better tomorrow. To a tomorrow in general.

## **Darkness**

I feel forlorn writing this, but I know that if I do not, then no one will. Then their memory would die in vain, as they did. Since the isolation, our little society has been at a crossroads. We are constantly surrounded by death, death with no hope.

The earth took my mother last month, about 27 days ago now. The wound in my heart is ripped open and raw as if it only happened yesterday, though. I always thought that she would be the exception. She always has been.

Nevertheless, she is not the only person the earth has taken this month, far from it. On the brighter side of things, a man happened upon our village. Elders said it was the first they'd seen since isolation.

From what little I know of love, I doubt he and I will ever share that, but he is the first and only person to make me smile since I lost my mother, Amaya. I want to be to someone what she was, and still is, to me. She held so much belief that the world would get kinder as the generations progress, that the world would heal itself when we did.

When more and more people started dying, she called out. She called out to the uncallable. She called out to whoever had the love of a mother, the connection and compassion of a black woman, and the power over life and earth. She called out in the name of life.

She called out every night until the darkness came. She called out at every chance she could. That her daughter and the daughters after her are given a chance in the light, to build a world she never had the privilege of living in. She called out in favor of me, that I, in the face of death, not only survive but continue to bring life into this dark world. That the life brings us light again.

I do not know where the sun went, or why she abandoned us, but I do know that my mother was no fool, and if she said that the light would once again return, then the light should once again return. Perhaps I too should start calling out, to make sure he and I's children can bask in the warmth of the dry sun.

## **The End [the Old]**

This is the end, I can taste it in the stale air. We, as humans, have said and joked about this many times before, but as I look at the world around us, the rubble that it has been reduced to, the death that entrenches us, I find nothing to laugh about.

If anyone ever finds this, If I live to survive past these moments, our suffering will not go in vain; if I die because of greed, division, bigotry, I refuse to die in vain. If we have a future, history will know what was done here.

Right now, the year is 2077. My name is Amaya, I come from what was formerly known as North America. Humanity is dying out. When the fires broke out, the wealthy hid, they protected themselves, as they'd always done, as we knew they would. After the fires decimated most homes, jobs, livelihoods, that's when the floods came.

People thought it was biblical, that this was the end of days that the christians raved about. If that was the case, judgment day has lasted for years, and their god has taken more souls than he's saved. We tried calling out, all of the world religions begged and pleaded with their deities, they called out for enlightenment, they called out for moksha, they called out for jannah, they called out for heaven, and in the end, even hell. Silence responded. It was more than enough to get the humans that survived to put down the phone and help ourselves.

We were divided then, in the most obvious of ways. In the ways we always have been. By the time the tundra arrived, we were separated to the point of violence. There was no intermingling, it would cost your life. Resources, time, care were too precious to waste on outsiders, to those who weren't our kind of people. At least, that's what they told all of us when we came knocking for help. Black women have been downtrodden for centuries, and even in the face of certain death, where all of our odds were the same, when we were looking to survive not in spite of, but in harmony with them, they left us to die.

We found each other, eventually. We went to Old Canada and settled on a once green hilltop, sheltered from view by the largest mountains we'd ever found. That was when the sickness settled. The tundra weakened the collective immune system of humanity, and there was no way out of this. We could not flee from our own bodies, no matter how hard we tried. No matter how hard we wanted to.

It was 217 days ago when the sickness started. There are rumors that the fires started up again, that the floods are continuing to overtake, that the rich didn't survive the cold. I believe them. I don't know how long it'll be before the earth takes me, it'd been trying for years. Many have grown desensitized to the probability of sudden and painful death, but as I sit here writing with my daughter fast asleep in those arms, I know I am not one of those people.

When she gets the chance to inherit this world, I hope it is nicer to her than it was to us. She will never know her father or her brother, but she will know me. And that will be enough.