

*Monday, October 29*

**Fights**

On Monday afternoon,  
I lean against the gate of Twin's genius school.  
When Aman asked why I was taking a train downtown  
I kissed it off, but I'm sure he'll bring it up later.  
So much happened this weekend,  
but still I prepared myself for what I knew  
I would have to do this afternoon.

Twin gets out an hour later than I do,  
and as the kids start filing out after the bell  
I spot Twin shuffling my way, but he's not alone.

He's with a tall, red-haired boy,  
with fingers the color of milk  
that brush lint off my brother's sweater softly  
the way Aman sometimes squeezes my hand.

*Xavier.*

Twin's name never leaves my lips  
but somehow he hears me think it.  
His head pops in my direction  
like a bobble-head doll.

He stumbles back from the white boy so fast  
he almost trips on his shoes.

I look between them, confirming what I've always known.  
Twin rushes my way and speaks into my ear.

"Xiomara, what are you doing here?"

And I don't need to tell him  
I came to knock my knuckles into someone's face.  
To redeem his black eye.  
✓ To let them know Twin isn't alone.

"You shouldn't have come to my school.  
I don't need you to fight for me anymore."

There is a balloon where my heart used to be  
✓ and it whooshes air out at the prick of his words.  
I look at the boy who gazes at Twin  
with love all over his face.

"Leave it alone, Xiomara,"  
I think Twin says. But it sounds more like:  
✓ "Leave me alone."