



THERE'S A NAME FOR THIS FEELING

Stories



Diane Gonzales Bertrand

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PIÑATA BOOKS
ARTE PÚBLICO PRESS
HOUSTON, TEXAS

There's a Name for this Feeling: Stories / Hay un nombre para lo que siento: Cuentos is made possible through grants from the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

Piñata Books are full of surprises!

Piñata Books
An imprint of
Arte Público Press
University of Houston
4902 Gulf Fwy, Bldg. 19, Rm 100
Houston, Texas 77204-2004

Cover design by Giovanni Mora

Bertrand, Diane Gonzales.

There's a name for this feeling: *Stories* / by Diane Gonzales Bertrand;
Spanish translation by Gabriela Baeza Ventura = *Hay un nombre para lo que
siento: Cuentos* / por Diane Gonzales Bertrand; traducción al español de
Gabriela Baeza Ventura.

p. cm.

Summary: A bilingual collection of ten contemporary stories of mixed-
up emotions, humorous mistakes, misguided actions, and unspeakable
sorrows. Includes discussion questions and ideas for writing.

ISBN 978-1-55885-784-1 (alk. paper)

[1. Interpersonal relations—Fiction. 2. Hispanic Americans—Fiction.
3. Short stories. 4. Spanish language materials—Bilingual.] I. Ventura,
Gabriela Baeza, translator. II. Title. III. Title: There is a name for this feel-
ing. IV. Title: Hay un nombre para lo que siento.

PZ7.B46357The 2014

[Fic]—dc23

2013038057

CIP

©The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American
National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed
Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

There's a Name for this Feeling: Stories © 2014 by Diane Gonzales Bertrand

Printed in the United States of America

April 2014–June 2014

Versa Press, Inc., East Peoria, IL

12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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To my extraordinary friends

*Cathy Adams
and
Kathleen Maloney*

THERE'S A NAME FOR THIS FEELING

How could Rodrigo have made such a dumb mistake? Breaking up with me? Seriously? Out of nowhere he said it was time for a change and to have a nice summer. Really? After I had made plans for us to do everything together? I kept quiet and didn't cause any drama, so he'd realize I was the perfect girlfriend and he'd ask me back. He only needed time to remember me: always holding his hand, doing my homework in the bleachers until basketball practice was over, always finding him in the cafeteria so we could sit together, putting notes inside his locker just to tell him *I love you*.

The day after we broke up, I had hatched the perfect plan to change his mind.

Two weddings were happening on the same day. My *prima* Aida had met Tomas in law school and they were getting married two weeks from Saturday. But Rodrigo's big brother Andre was getting married too. If I went to Andre and Veronica's wedding, I'd have the romantic setting I needed to get Rodrigo back as my boyfriend.

The day of the weddings was total chaos in our house. My dad was running late from work and my mom was trying to help everyone get dressed. I chose the middle of the commotion to speak up. It was always easier to get my way with Mom when she was too busy

to think. Her face looked sweaty and tired when I cornered her in the hall to tell her my plans.

"Why do you want to go to *that* wedding, Lucinda?" Mom said. She held my little brothers' white shirts in her hands, each one now cleaned and carefully ironed.

"Mom, I told you they invited me," I said. "I should be there."

Her eyebrows crinkled as she replied, "What about Aida and Tomas? She's your cousin. 'Where's Lucinda?' they'll ask me. What do I tell everyone?"

I sighed. Mom was so predictable. It didn't take much to plan things out if your mom always said what you expect her to. "Mom, really, it's no big deal. With so much *familia* there, no one will miss me!"

She thought of something else. "How will you get there? We're all going to Aida's wedding."

I had an answer ready. "No problem, Mom. Andre and Veronica are getting married at the university. Aida's wedding is at St. Jude's. They're barely two miles from each other. Pedro can take me. He doesn't do anything but study anyway." I had gone over every detail in my mind, even looked at a map. I had all the right answers. Maybe I should be the next one to go to law school.

Mom stared at me with a slight frown. Then she nodded and said, "Go if you want to. I'll tell Pedro to give you a ride." She walked away, calling out to my sister and little brothers to change their clothes for the wedding. It was so great to be part of a big family. Who'd notice if I wasn't around?

I was dressed early for Pedro to drive me to the university for Andre and Veronica's wedding. Ever since my cousin moved in to finish college, he never complained

about driving me anywhere. I liked his quiet ways. Once we were in the car together, he asked me, "Why are you going to another family's wedding, Lucy?"

"Why not? They invited me." A *good answer*, I thought.

He shrugged and then started the car. I felt so proud of myself. Everything was happening exactly as I planned.

"Pick me up about five," I told Pedro before I stepped out of the car in front of the university chapel. I smoothed my blue dress and ran up the steps.

I walked inside the chapel. The wedding ceremony had begun. I quietly found a spot on the groom's side of the church. Right away, I looked for Rodrigo. In the front bench I saw his parents, then his older sister and her husband with their little daughter Sally. She was smiling up at Rodrigo, who wore a black tuxedo.

He looked just as handsome when he was my escort at my *quinceañera*. I remembered he gave me three pink roses. So romantic. Later, when we danced I told Rodrigo, "We're only fifteen, but I already know it'll be you and me together always."

That night he kept kissing me and agreed with anything I said.

That's why I had done the right thing by coming to this wedding. And when Rodrigo saw me today, he'd agree with me again.

I waited until the ceremony was over and watched the bridal party take a dozen pictures near the altar. Then I walked up the side aisle. The first people I greeted were Andre and Veronica. They were hugging everybody, and Veronica even told me, "I'm so glad you came."

I turned to Rodrigo's parents next. Mr. and Mrs. Almaraz didn't hug me, and both looked confused when they saw me. I started to say "Congratulations," but two other ladies got their attention first. I didn't care. Anyway it would be better to speak to them with Rodrigo beside me. I shook hands with Rodrigo's older sister and her husband. I waved at Sally who smiled at me.

A million butterflies fluttered in my stomach when Rodrigo and I finally made eye contact. He ran his fingers through his dark hair and shook his head. In an instant he turned and walked out a side door. What was going on? Then I knew!

He'd always been shy with strangers, and this wedding was full of them. No problem. I'd find a way to get us alone. Everybody walked across the yard to a white building decorated for the wedding reception, and I followed them. Inside I found the ladies room to check myself out. I had worn Rodrigo's favorite dress, a blue one with silver trim. My long hair was curled and shiny. I looked *good*. When I came out looking for him, I was ready to say, "Everyone makes mistakes. I love you. Let's get back together."

He sat alone near the windows overlooking the balcony. Did he choose the most romantic spot in the room just for us? I gave him a winner's smile, a smile I knew would end with the best kiss of our lives.

He looked up when I appeared, but he didn't stand. He shook his head before he said, "What are you doing here, Lucy?"

I had gone over this conversation a hundred times in my head. I was so ready for this moment. "I was invit-

ed, Rodrigo. We planned to come to the wedding together, remember?”

“That was before we broke up.” He raised one eyebrow as he said, “What if I had brought another girl?”

I laughed like he said the silliest thing in the world. “But you didn’t. And I’m here. Aren’t you glad I came?”

“No, I’m not glad.” Rodrigo’s dark eyes narrowed. “I broke up with you. Don’t you get it?” He sat stiff in a chair, his lips barely moving as he said, “I don’t want you here, Lucy. You need to go. You’re pathetic.”

I couldn’t breathe. All my plans, my perfect answers, suffocated in shock and sadness. I stepped back and felt my knees wobble. I looked around to see a room filled with people, yet I never felt so lonely in my life.

Rodrigo stood up and walked closer to Andre and Veronica. They stood in a receiving line and talked to their guests like any happy couple would.

I barely smiled at them. And I hoped anyone who saw me stumble near the door wasn’t thinking *what’s she doing here?*

I sat alone on the cement steps outside the chapel. Rodrigo had called me pathetic. How could he say that? I wanted to cry, but then I’d ruin my makeup and actually *look* pathetic. I made myself think about summer. Things I could do with my other friends, things I could do with my family. At least I’d have three months before I saw Rodrigo at school.

I glanced at my watch only once before Pedro showed up in his car. How could that be? I was too embarrassed to call him for a ride. I figured I was stuck here for another hour.