

HOLY MOTHER

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Dusting seconds from fast moving clocks,
she coughs what ifs lingering in her throat
like big pieces of cotton, bits of paper from a cigar.
Ceremony's requisite releasing the weight of left children,
burials of sacred hearts.

Volcanic ash silhouettes stamp
her skin. Left El Salvador seeking salve
and bandage, anxious faces in the rearview.
Didn't have time to mourn
my bleeding.

Her grief overpowers the mechanics
to bear, or not bear country, family
forcibly severed. So she continues to bleed.
Her answers unsewing the loose hems of the present.

Hija, yo no tuve tiempo por la menopausia,
is what she actually said, maybe,
she was laughing.

Remembering a moment
when she demanded every eye,

she plays warped vinyls by Marco Antonio Muñoz,
envisions the yellowing light that welcomed
her Saturday reprieves at El Club Moctezuma.

"Taxee, taaxee."

Five apartment neighbors filed into cabs off to el club
looking for a dance and refill of home country.
The missing pieces fading behind rounds. Clank of ice cubes
interrupting the holy mother routine—mother, nanny,
keeper of someone else's children.

Así es hija. We would leave
La Virgencita to watch over our precious pictures.
All we had of their faces. So we could drink separation away
with the swirl of la canción "El tamarindo,"
and the hard truths de Los Panchos.

I fall asleep in the hum of the afternoon's heat,
cradled by the lap of her stories, dream of waterfalls
powered by all the tears she tells me at 82 she regrets
shedding. For a man, for anyone.

In my dream, no one drowns.
No one gets trapped
in a Maria Félix red lipstick
dramatic movie title kind of way,
in the rushing waters
of delayed dreams disappearing,
even in the static symbol of the Virgin Mary.

So, did La Virgen go through menopause?
Girl, she didn't even have sex.