

## YOU ARE HERE

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**Big** bright dots on map beacon from nine hours of road.  
Paper unrolls to the tempo of seventies tapes that play  
under the paneling and carpet hull of a brown Chevy van.  
Swaying to the music that lies to me as I sleep  
without a seat or a belt, I will always be adjusting  
the straps of bags. Straightening, my shoulders settle  
for solace in the back of a Salvadoran hippie love bus.

North from volcanoes, breathing out from under  
smog-covered rooftops, my eyelashes flash  
in front of the long stretch of wood floor  
standing between the buzz of Mission Street and the palm  
of his hand across her cheek. A Buddhist bearing  
mysterious teas trying to wash away the wounds of his broken  
umbilical cord, he was still the first to remind us, all of us,  
his mother sitting upright in the old chair, my mother swiping  
at nightmares and my eleven-year-old self,  
that he was un hombre in charge, in case there was a question.

Pieces stick out when the peaceful uncle first  
transgresses a little girl's presumption that she is safe somewhere.  
How do you flatten the edges of a snapshot, of accepting the order of things?  
She did barge into the old woman's house, push past her too hard, yell

in too high a pitch. Black outline of five fingers on skin, this shadow  
ties our tongues. Watch how you swing it, a man might cut it back into place.  
Pursed lips holding his cigarette, he only really needed one hand.

Inside-out pockets dropping lo que pasó all over the floor, detour  
en route to proud proclamations. I was born  
in Hollywood. Years behind the freeway, tangled  
in sirens pulling up to the garages below our apartment  
bearing dead dogs, murdered uncles, shaped my pilgrimage.  
Keep moving, scars won't have time to seep into your skin.  
Footsteps can't erase birthmarks. How come you're not  
crazy? How, well-meaning friends ask quietly,  
did you make it out, alive?

Arms stretched wide trace lines down a corridor  
of preschool, playground, bus route, English classes, pupusa  
take out. Puntitos along the long knots of Vermont and Melrose.  
Crossroads unveil Santanecas that come in twos, Daly City parientes,  
cable car rides, embossed S.F. t-shirts. Home, it turns out, are the strings  
tying together shattering glass voices, blurred images  
better left in static and short sweet reprieves like seals  
barking below the cliff. Mad, drunk, the van parked,  
we all needed sleep in the back of the Salvadoran hippie love bus.

Home turns out to be the tapestry detailing detours, displaying disaster,  
piecing the distance between the points on my map  
together.