

# CHICHARRAS, A/C

My despair is a paralysis  
that I never knew was there  
that I never knew was  
despair:  
hard to put a finger on  
until you sit and  
settle in

It was the memory of our ride  
down Military Drive  
insulated from  
the air outside,  
over 100,  
heat index 115  
says George  
but inside the car  
is artificially  
conditioned,  
thank God  
thank God  
for that:  
my last two cars  
didn't have it

It is the memory of a ride  
in the twilight of cars  
over the river at Espada,  
then caught in the throat  
of a train, seeing the coal cars  
crawl by en route to Calaveras  
seeing Calumet's flare  
over the trees

And my eldest child  
in the backseat  
telling me:

Hope  
I'm not alive  
when global warming starts.

I can't bear to tell him  
that it isn't if  
any longer,  
it isn't even *when*

I remember him standing once  
outside with a moth in his hand. It had died

when it flew into the hot wax  
of a candle. Outside  
on the porch  
he hid from us  
to cry,  
cradling it  
in his hand,  
a tiny Icarus

My heart aches, thinking  
of how he loves the world  
of tiny things, his eye  
on the spider  
and the sparrow—  
and so I follow it back  
and back, the ache  
within me, the pain  
of our failure,  
until the content  
drops away  
to reveal  
only tightness in bands  
around my throat, my eyes.  
Only constriction,  
only salt water, echo  
of oceans

until  
it is suddenly plain  
and I recognize  
the name of it,  
that it even has a name  
to be spoken, a shape  
my mouth can make  
to pronounce it.

*There* it is,  
that's what it is:  
despair, yes,  
I see you, come in.  
It floats to the surface  
like a paper flower  
when my mind stops scrambling  
for solutions and  
in the quiet  
and just for a moment  
I hear the high summer whirr

of chicharras outside  
over the a/c. And  
I hear the summer whirr  
of the a/c too.  
Everything is alive—  
not just chicharras  
—to wake

up

into

everything is there  
to hold you

and if

there were only this  
in a lifetime of trance,  
if there was only  
one single moment  
of stillness,  
of waking up into  
what is here:

it would be enough

it is

enough

that it becomes  
possible  
again  
to imagine  
continuing.  
For him,  
for the tiniest  
ones.

—Marisol Cortez

BIO: *Marisol Cortez* is Deceleration's Executive Editor. As a writer and community-based scholar, her work is grounded in Chicanx and decolonial movements for justice and earth protection in South Texas.

