

En Recuerdo De



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ISBN: 978-1-956076-21-9

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En Recuerdo De explores the ways we carry people, places, and histories after they are gone.

Across poetry and prose, writers trace grief through family rituals, inherited objects, language, migration, political violence, and the fragmented records left behind.

These works move between intimate mourning and collective memory, revealing remembrance as an act of care, inheritance, and resistance against erasure.

Wake

ANGEL VENTURA AVELAR

Para Rosa

We clung to grandma's molars as caries do,
witnessing the words that could not
find footing in her mouth.

The prayer circle, the warm blood against our skin:
Our hair is matted, our pores wet sap—
made thick with your breath.

Your ascension, a work of art, like the
rue leaves across my shirtless spine and
albumen diffused in the glass of water.

I'll take you farther than amen,
than your last words, as I wake
with the teething pain of your

graduation.



To the Man Sitting at the Table in Front of Me at a Cheap Hotel's Breakfast Buffet

CLAUDIA EXCARET SANTOS

You look a lot like my grandfather
drinking just a coffee
in your white shirt
black pants
old man shoes.

You look a lot like my grandfather
who died earlier this week,
who I had not seen all this year.

I wanna ask the waitress if you're alone,
if you're lonely
as I know he was
even the last times,
physically there
but mentally so away.

You look a lot like my grandfather:
white face,
white legs,
white hair,

so I'd like to sit in front of you,
make you smile
with the teeth he did not have.

Why is this poem about your recently deceased grandfather written in English?

Because I was thinking in English when I wrote it.
Because I was living in English when my mom texted to let me
know.

Because in Spanish, I couldn't face it.
Because I have a meeting at 5:00,
and if I write about my grandfather in Spanish,
I'll never stop writing.
Because I have a deadline at 6:00
and if I think about my grandfather in Spanish
I'll never stop crying.

I have no time to mourn in my own language,
as I had no time to call
when there was a chance.

A mi papá Jesús

Te pienso en los desayunos,
tomando café
con tu guayabera blanca,
tus pantalones planchados,
y tus huaraches de piel.

Te pienso de ahora en adelante
con la certeza de que no puedo volverte a ver.

Quisiera haberte preguntado más cosas.
Pero no pude enfrentar el día en que la cordura ya no te dio
para responder.
Quise quedarme tu imagen:
fuerte, sabio, jefe, hombre mexicano;
en cambio, solo te dejé.

Me di cuenta de que te estaba perdiendo
cuando llegaste a casa con una dentadura nueva
que no querías utilizar.

Preferiste la boca chimuela,
tú, que siempre habías preferido
las cosas de cuero café.

Solo te dejé. Ingrata. Mala niña mexicana.

Y aún así, tú te quedas conmigo.
Y aún así, yo te llevo conmigo.

OLD CHOLAS

AMALIA CASTILLO-MORRISON

There's a cross on a rocky hill overlooking the
San Javier del Bac Mission. On one of the arms
of it, someone had tied a red bandana.

"For my vato," she wrote in black on the white
metal. "I miss you."

*you're not supposed to write
poems about grandfathers*

CRISTI DONOSO

for Mario Rafael Carvajal

he calls me niña, again. I am the wrong size now
riding in the back of his red Datsun—faded paint
chipped and peeling—that rolls over cobblestones
and stops for grazing cows. up front, his soft, white hair
turns sparse beneath a curling Panama hat.

he is disoriented, he says, *strange*.
he has no pain now, remembers when he was a boy, just three:
so much pain and there was no salve, no cure. he cried
and cried and his mother
sat beside him and also cried.

I can't see you, he says. I can
see you, I say, and you look the same.
though I was born after vitiligo
stripped away his color. now
his mind is passing
into some other world. something is bending
the arc of time.

strange, I say, here we are in a house
that no longer exists. can I borrow your typewriter
in the hall? can you help me spool the paper? I need to write
something about when you were a boy in pain
and I also sat beside you.

The Teeth of the Comb

ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ

When Abuela died, the comb was still warm.

That was the first thing Marisol noticed, even before the quiet.

Before the absence settled into the corners of the house like dust that refused to be swept. Before the relatives arrived with casseroles and careful voices, speaking grief like it was a fragile language.

The comb sat on the dresser where it always had, its amber teeth catching the afternoon light. A few strands of silver hair clung to it, curved like punctuation marks—commas in a sentence that had ended too abruptly.

No one touched it.

They moved around it instead, like it had become sacred or dangerous or both.

Marisol stood in the doorway for a long time, watching it. The room still smelled faintly of rosewater and eucalyptus oil. The bed was made, too neatly, like Abuela had known something and decided to leave everything in order.

“Déjalo,” her mother said softly behind her. Leave it.

But Marisol stepped forward anyway.

The comb felt heavier than it should have. Not physically—no, it was light, smooth, familiar. But something in it resisted being lifted, as if it had grown roots into the dresser, into the room, into the years themselves.

She turned it in her hand.

She remembered mornings.

Always mornings.

Abuela sitting behind her, the sun slicing through the curtains

CONTINUED

in long golden blades. The radio murmuring old songs—boleros full of longing, voices that sounded like they’d been crying for decades and had grown used to it.

“Sit still,” Abuela would say.

Marisol never did.

The first pull of the comb always hurt. It snagged, caught in knots that had formed overnight, small rebellions of hair refusing order.

“Ow!”

“Pain means it’s working,” Abuela would reply, not unkindly.

She parted Marisol’s hair with precision, drawing lines as straight as roads. Each section smoothed, tamed, braided.

Fingers quick and sure, moving with a rhythm that felt older than instruction.

It wasn’t just grooming.

It was architecture.

It was memory being arranged into something visible.

Now the house had no rhythm.

Just the slow turning of the ceiling fan, ticking faintly, like a clock that had lost confidence in time.

Marisol sat on the edge of the bed.

She raised the comb to her own hair.

For a moment, she hesitated.

Then she dragged it through.

It caught immediately.

She winced, eyes watering as it pulled at a knot near the nape of her neck.

“Pain means it’s working,” she whispered.
 The words felt different in her mouth. Less certain. More like
 a question pretending to be an answer.
 She tried again.
 And again.
 Each stroke slower, more deliberate, like she was learning a
 language without a teacher.
 By evening, her arms ached. Her scalp felt raw. But her hair
 was braided—crooked, imperfect, but done.
 Her mother noticed.
 “Your abuela used to do it tighter,” she said.
 “I know.”
 That night, Marisol slept in Abuela’s bed.
 Not because she was asked to. Because something in the
 room felt unfinished, like a sentence waiting for its final
 word.
 She dreamed.
 In the dream, she stood on a shoreline that did not belong to
 any place she knew. The sky was neither day nor night, but
 something in between—a suspended hour that refused to
 choose.
 Abuela stood at the edge of the water.
 Not as she had been at the end—thin, dim, dissolving—but
 vibrant. Solid. Her hair loose, wild, catching the wind like a
 banner.
 She held the comb.
 But it was larger now. Or maybe the world was smaller.

She dragged it through the ocean.
 Each stroke parted the waves.
 And from the water came things—objects, sounds,
 fragments.
 A teacup. A laugh. The smell of fried plantains. The echo of a
 lullaby Marisol hadn’t heard since she was five.
 The sea was full of memory.
 And Abuela was combing it into order.
 “Come,” she said, without turning.
 Marisol stepped forward, her feet sinking into wet sand that
 felt warm, almost alive.
 “What are you doing?” she asked.
 Abuela paused, the comb suspended above the water.
 “Fixing what tangles,” she said simply.
 Marisol looked at the sea. It was endless. Chaotic. Impossible.
 “You can’t fix all of it.”
 Abuela smiled.
 “I don’t have to.”
 She resumed combing.
 The sound was strange—not the soft drag of plastic through
 hair, but something deeper. Like wind through branches.
 Like pages turning in a book written in a language no one
 remembered how to read.
 Marisol reached out.
 Her fingers brushed the water.
 And suddenly she was inside it—not drowning, not sinking,
 but surrounded. Memories pressed against her like currents.
 Some hers. Some not.
 A woman she didn’t recognize dancing barefoot in a kitchen.

A child crying over a broken toy.
 A man laughing so hard he couldn't breathe.
 Lives layered over lives.
 "Take what is yours," Abuela's voice said, distant now.
 Marisol reached.
 She pulled something from the water.
 A moment: her, small, sitting between Abuela's knees, the
 comb moving gently this time, no pain, just warmth.
 She held it close.
 When she looked up, Abuela was gone.
 The comb floated on the surface.
 Marisol woke with it in her hand.
 Not larger. Not magical.
 Just the same amber comb.
 But the strands of hair in its teeth seemed... brighter.
 She didn't clean them.
 Days passed.
 Then weeks.
 The house changed slowly, reluctantly. Laughter returned
 in cautious bursts. The casseroles stopped coming. Life,
 stubborn as weeds, pushed through the cracks.
 But every morning, Marisol sat by the window.
 She combed her hair.
 Sometimes it hurt.
 Sometimes it didn't.
 And sometimes—just sometimes—the comb seemed to
 move differently in her hand. Surer. Older. As if guided by
 something that remembered better than she did.

She began braiding her niece's hair.
 "Sit still," she said.
 The girl squirmed.
 "Ow!"
 Marisol smiled, pulling the comb through gently.
 "Pain means it's working."
 This time, it didn't feel like a lie.
 It felt like inheritance.
 And somewhere, in a place where oceans hold memories and time
 tangles itself into knots, something was still being combed—
 slowly, patiently—into something almost like peace.

My Collection is Full

CONTINUED

OLIVIA D'ZAVALA

continuing the conversation of "Like Rare Pokémon Cards, We Go through Life Collecting the Dead."

Listen, if you had told me that I would have a collection of the dead memorialized with both digital and paper ephemera, obituaries, in memoriam pamphlets, screenshots of FB memories, taking up precious space in my Google drive, I would have said "Chale!" and cackled but now I'm running out of terabytes, out of space, to process this grief. I don't have the room to remember any of them and besides that would cost an additional \$1.99 USD per month for Google Storage which takes your memories hostage if you can't keep up with the price which is only 23 cents in Thailand but I live in Denver where everything is available but only for a fee, only for a monthly life contract.

Brandi takes up the most room because I kept her beanie and her journal with a dollar bill in it with the words "I Love Crabby" and she did love Crabby and Crabby found her that morning, choked to death on her own vomit because she was mixing vodka and codeine cough syrup because she had a cough

but she also had a drinking demon and because it was a rental we had to help her mom clean the vomit and death fluids out of the carpet from her bedroom because who can afford a crime scene clean up team and besides it wasn't a crime

and years later her forest green Aéropostale wool beanie, infused in clove smoke and soaked with cheap whiskey, caught fire and burned away one night when the man who would become my husband ex husband set it too close to a wall heater in that cheap ass rental, and yes at her funeral I sat and cried with her baby brother, he was 21, I was 28, it's OK, but we fucked after we buried her and we fucked hard, crying, burying into each other.

My parents? Not for this discussion. Not for any discussion. They're dead and my dad left his handwritten poems that were dedicated to me and my mom left my brother her entire estate, so just move along, as I had to do.

Here's an Olan Mills picture of my Granny, alongside some costume jewelry and many handwritten notes and they said my 92-year-old Granny passed away after breaking her hip while she was in a senior home and I don't understand how broken hips lead to death but apparently it's common amongst the Golden Oldies.

I wasn't there. I can't comment. But I know she ran down Dallam street during twilight,

midnight, at my childhood grandparents' home, her
 nightgown
 sheer and long, flapping around her skeletal frame,
 screaming into the Texas Panhandle wind that Buddy
 was back, she knew he was dead but he was back, goddamnit,
 right there in her house, and she knew
 he was still screwing that red-headed bitch from Allsup's,
 weren't they always red-headed bitches,
 serving him bitter black coffee with a side of titties.

Ahhh, fuck's sake, here is a screenshot of a final conversation.
 Oh, Marcutio. My star-crossed never lover.
 We would sit on the patio at Rumor's, that ghetto ass dive bar
 off 10th and Georgia,
 and we watched the World Cup drinking straight whiskey at 9
 a.m. because in Texas bars open at 7 a.m.,
 and we screamed "GOOOOAAAALLLLL" when Spain kicked
 that shit in
 and sealed the win against the Netherlands, Marcutio and I
 screaming
 and pounding the bar top, drunk and clinking empty whiskey
 glasses,
 and I wonder if Marc felt that same manic euphoria when he
 opened his door
 and was gunned down by the Amarillo city police department,
 in the frame of his own doorway, his own gun in hand,

ready for the next beat in his narrative.
 No one wants a binder of death playbills
 unless they came from Broadway
 and Pokémon Go takes up too much space on my phone

which is to say that the dead
 all resume too much room
 in my DNA.

So go ahead, dear reader...now it's your turn. What's in
 your collection?
 Do you also have Pokémon cards or maybe Magic the
 Gathering?
 Dead butterflies pinned to corkboards? Yellowed pieces of
 newspaper
 from the olden days of yore, tucked into a book on a shelf
 you never visit anymore?
 Movie stubs and used condom wrappers stashed in a
 keepsake shoebox from Payless
 covered in a layer of dust and nostalgia and the
 bittersweet fruits of heartache?
 Grayish baby teeth rattling around in old cigar humidors?
 A lock of hair from who knows where?
 But you know.

Talk to me. Show me your death dances.
 I won't tell.



Cumbia de la piragua

GLAUCONAR YUE

I still dream of the army of stars
Following the piragua of Guillermo Cubillo
to Chimichagua
I don't know where Chimichagua is
or if I will ever make it there
I don't think I would belong there
I am glad that the piragua stopped by my house
sailing down Schlachtensee, cutting its frozen surface
of the merciless Berlin winter
with its solar beak
and proving that all rivers are connected

Desde los archivos de una revolución bonita

LEONORA SIMONOVIS

Caracas, Venezuela, 11 de abril de 2002

En Puente Llaguno, el muchacho mira
un cielo que no está listo para recibirlo.¹

Las calles reverberan con gritos y consignas
de “fuera el tirano,” “asesino,” “libertad.”²

Lluvia de balas.³ Gente que corre, empuja, llora,
cuerpos que caen en el pavimento, rojo rojito.⁴

Este país es un mapa sin líneas,⁵ gente cansada
de tanto luchar, libertad condicionada, himno⁶

moribundo, requiem en descomposición. Un día
alguien encontrará nuestros huesos⁷ enterrados en brea,

retazos de tela roja desteñidos, quizás una bandera⁸
cubriendo signos⁹ de una pancarta en descomposición.¹⁰

1 Untranslatable/dialogue/between a boy/and the sky

2 Non-negotiable/lives /ideas/losses

3 Gunpowder/sweat/rust/ no water/or petrichor

4 Do you know what this means?

5 All the exits, blocked

6 Are you listening? Do you care?

7 Land of ossuaries/ghosts/endangered humans

8 This means nothing

9 Do you hear me?

Flags are Boundaries are Promises are Threats

ANGEL VENTURA AVELAR

I forgot what she told me, but the lines across her neck,
which I inherited, reigned a tight silence. She hugged me
without saying goodbye, and my tears formed a noose on
her. She would die out of breath two years later. She had told
me one of the first tears she shed in this country was within
a truck bed as she saw the American flag jutting out of the
margins; one of the first tears I shed in that country was
when, from the passenger's seat, I saw the country's patch
on the National Guard's arm. Lines beneath my eyes formed
after she wiped off my threadbare tears. I wonder if I'll die
from tumors in my eyes. Both of us, at last, deported from
our bodies, God receiving us in our natal Country.

DANIELA ORDÓÑEZ DELGADO

There's something on my shoulder. It stops me. It feels wrinkled, like a raisin. It grabs me and I'm finally out of the water— a river; a brown, wide one. The gold air around me is heavy with steam and sweat. This is not home.

"One more," shouts a man who holds me by the armpit, trying to pull me onto a canoe. His arms are darker than mine. Another guy grabs me from the other side and pulls. My leg bumps into an oar. What's this place?

"She's not from around here. Look how pale," he says.

I know that. I try to tell him, but nothing comes out of my mouth.

"And pretty, too. What a waste," says the other, laying me down on the canoe's floor. His tone makes me cold. I'm vulnerable outside the water. From the sound of the current, I can tell it's been raining a lot. It pulls even harder in the middle, hard enough to rip out any tree foolish enough to stand in its way. If I were to go back in now, the river would take me in seconds... How many miles have I drifted down? As if it mattered.

I tense every muscle, to jump, to roll, to turn back to the river— nothing. I stay lying on the bottom of the canoe. The touch of the cold breeze tickles. Not even my hands tremble. They should've left me where they found me. I had a plan. For me.

I can hear some of their talk, counting the wounds on my body; looking how deep, how uneven they are. Strange how fresh they look, they say. I know where each one of those is, though I haven't seen them. I don't remember pain, but I do remember hands pinning me to the ground; the cold of metal on

my throat, and then the water. Days must have passed, time doesn't stack right anymore.

The canoe stops, as if it's hit something. The riverbed must have shifted again, they say. One of them leans over me. His hands go under my arms, and he grunts under the weight of me. My body doesn't help. It sags, waterlogged, like an old pillow that's lost its shape.

The canoe tilts under his weight. Water gets in, and he mutters something I can't catch, but the other one seems to understand.

"Then grab her by the waist. Like this." He answers, gesturing, the way you'd lift a sack of potatoes. "No, wait, wait! You're tilting it too much!"

"Help me then, damn it!"

They adjust their grip making my shoulder hit the wood.

"Now. Ready? One, two"

They lift me for a second, but my hip snags on the edge. I dangle halfway, the water waiting. My body won't move the way any of us expect. Maybe, if I fight harder, I could vanish into the river.

"She's full of water," one of them says, wiping the sweat off his forehead.

Yes, and I want to stay that way.

"We can't just leave her here."

Yes, you can. The river keeps pulling.

"Fine, then drag her a little. Just a little bit more. Slide her."

The roughness of their hands makes my legs itchy. The canoe bites into my spine as they go again.

And with a muted splash, I fall. The shallow water catches me. The river comes up to their calves but doesn't take me. They pause. I'm something they don't want to touch anymore.

One pushes the canoe while the other hoists me over his

shoulder. I hang over his back, drenched, dripping onto him. Where are they taking me? I just wanted to float. To drift. To see the ocean at least once. That dark blue I've only seen on TV, I wanted it to swallow me. People always taking, even when there's nothing left to take.

We sink into the wet sand with every step, but the trees on the bank are getting closer. It's my last chance, I can still go back. But no. Stillness is all my body has left.

"We should at least bury her," one says.

Is that what you pulled me out for? No. No! Leave me here, please. I can float. Don't put me in the dirt. Don't trap me. In the river, at least I knew where I was going.

The eyes of the people on the shore follow my body. Their faces don't change. They cross themselves like I'm the tenth, neither the first nor the last. No one gasps.

A young man steps forward to help, but he's startled when he touches my skin. He pities me, as if I could die again.

I'm still dripping when they tie me to the mule's back. A wet rope presses against my body—loose enough that I feel I might fall, yet nothing in me moves, not even my thumb.

"Take her to Consuelo," the young man says. "She was waiting for an N.N."

An N.N.?

Is that what's left of me?

It's noon. The mule's shadow falls directly under us. The path turns right and the sounds of the current fade. We turn again; the breeze retreats, the leaves go still. I hear a woman's voice in the distance. I wish they'd tied me differently, so I could see more than her feet. Her ankles are the color of panela sugar, brown but gold, a bit darkened by the sun.

"Put her in the back, Luchito, on top of the ironing table."

She must be Consuelo. Her voice cuts through the air, but each sentence ends like a sigh. The men lower me without a word. They carry me inside. The gray of the unplastered walls makes me want to run. Unfinished, but with no future either. We walk past the living room. Of course, her ironing table is outside—this heat leaves you no choice—and I finally see the sky. It's been so long. The blue is still the same light blue, the color I imagined heaven would be.

Maybe this is it—I'm tied to this body. My memories are scattered and too heavy to gather. The few I reach are useless.

I must have been here for a while. Maybe three hours? Now the sun hits my left arm. There are kites in the sky. Is it August already? Funny, that I remember that. I can't see the kids flying them, but the green and purple kites look like one I used to have.... at least I think so.

Consuelo comes in and touches my arm. After the water, her touch feels like warm jelly.

"Thank you."

I hear her breathing.

"Our Father, who art in heaven..."

Why is she doing this? Her hands are too warm. She keeps praying. I have no choice but to listen. She inhales deeply, like someone about to dive into water.

She moves me. Beneath the table, the ground is orange and swampy. Coffee wouldn't grow here. Memories spin in my head like wind, but I can only catch one or two. Consuelo's hands never stop as she prays—prayers I still remember, some of them. She turns me again, leaves me face up, and stands on my left. When she reaches my neck, she stops and steps back.

"Can I call you Lina?" her voice trembles. She waits.

No. That's not—I'm not Lina.

"Just for today," she whispers.

I know that's not my name.
 "Just while I get you ready."
 My 'no' doesn't reach her. She grazes my collarbone and then lifts my chin.
 "Look how pretty you are," she says. "Don't worry, I've done this many times."
 Not with me.
 "But with you... I get nervous." She says softly. "You're the first No Name we're going to adopt."
 Adopt me?
 She wipes my forehead with a damp cloth, slowly.
 "Lina..."
 No.
 "You always hated when I touched your hair. But look at this mess, I have to comb it. I'll be gentle."
 Her fingers pass through the strands. There are knots. She pours some oil and hums. It's not a lullaby, but almost.
 "I always admired how strong you were, Lina."
 Don't. Don't call me that.
 "You didn't cry that time when you fell from the tree."
 Can't she see I'm not her?
 "You just got up and threw a guava at your cousin, remember?"
 I try to scream. Nothing.
 "And then they came to tell me you were gone. I didn't believe them—they didn't know you like I did. Not my Lina. As if a mother could live with that."
 She swallows a sob while her hand smooths the hem of my blouse. It's still damp.
 "Where are you, mi niña? Alone? In that water?"
 Please.

Her hand travels down my arm to my fingers.
 "Lina, you must've fought hard. Look at these nails."
 Enough with that.
 "They think we'll forget. They think we'll move on."
 Between tears, she grabs something from the shelf. A small bottle. Nail polish. She paints my left pinky.
 "Your favorite. You always chose this one."
 She lifts my hand for me to see.
 "You said it made your hands look clean, even when they weren't."
 Lilac.
 "You worked hard, my dear. Your hands cracked from the harvest. Remember how we soaked them in milk at night?"
 No. I wish, but no.
 "We never should've let you go back there."
 The river rushes through my head. She starts on my other hand.
 "Why didn't I listen?"
 Green blurs. Black boots. The blade. The truck. Water everywhere.
 "But you were brave, my baby. Strong. If you could've come back, you would have."
 I tried.
 She leans closer and I can see the tears sliding down her cheeks until they wet my jaw.
 "I know I tell everyone we'll find you, but a mother always knows. Your father doesn't want me to do this, but I need to. He says I'm giving up."
 She looks into my eyes.
 "Your father doesn't want to admit he's lost hope too, but I see him going from town to town, looking through No Names graves,

among the bones.”

She drags a brush across my cheekbones.

“But I’m bringing you back. This way.”

She breaks.

“I miss you. Every day.”

She holds my hand.

“Let me call you Lina. Just until the end, my darling.”

Something in me nods, and she knows it. I let myself imagine that her hands could make me as beautiful as she says. Does my family miss me like this, like she misses her daughter?

“It’s been two years. My baby.”

She pinches my cheek.

Would I still be a body after two years? Look, another kite. Is it really August? I didn’t leave that long ago.

“Maybe someone did this for you too, my sweet girl.”

A memory lands right in front of me.

“Lina, it’s not that we’re replacing you, but I need this. I need to bury someone.”

They told all of us to climb into the back of the truck. I ran. But he was faster. He said something before pressing the knife against my body. That sharp pain again. Cold.

“My baby, you’re so beautiful,” says Consuelo through tears.

The black rubber boots that threw me into the river...

“At least I had you with me for seventeen birthdays. Before those bastards came.”

But what about the rest? I want to see my family’s faces.

“They’re carving the headstone already. Your uncle’s finishing it.”

When she finally calms down, we both look at the kites again. It’s like she can hear me thinking.

A door creaks, and I hear footsteps dragging across the floor. More voices. So many, soft, behind the wall. Consuelo says goodbye.

Says she’s going to get what’s missing. Someone coughs. The air shifts. Smells like incense. The volume rises around me. The next part is about to begin.

Rain starts. I can hear the drumming on the zinc roof. Now a wet soil smell rises. Voices come and go. They bring in a coffin. Others come in with framed portraits. Pictures of Lina everywhere. The drops grow louder, drowning out a few sobs, Consuelo’s, I think. There aren’t many. They pray to me, as if I could do something. As if I was the Lina I’m not. I still hear them. A small voice reaches my ears, but I can’t see her.

“Can you help me find my dog?”

She’s behind me.

“She ran away a week ago.”

I wish I could.

“Lina always played with her.”

But she looks at me like she knows who I am.

“Mom says you can help. That you’ll go to heaven and take our messages.”

She trusts me. She places her hand on my side and waits.

Could I keep pretending to be Lina? Just for her? I don’t know these stories. The river erased me, but if she needs a messenger, I can carry a few prayers.

They tell her to step aside. I’m being lifted again, more gently now. I see the coffin. They bring me closer. Consuelo lights a candle, and I see her crying again. I wish I could cry with her. What the river takes, it keeps.

They lower me. I don’t fit, not quite, but they make me. I see a kite through the window then everything goes dark.

I can still hear them praying, but there’s nothing now.

My parents will never know where I rest. But this family will. And for now, I let that be enough.

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