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Author

Lopez, Daniel Lizola

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Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

the immurement of tradition

By Daniel "Xetini" López

mi cultura, as it was:

el Jefe¹ holds the family down with steel toed boots & wintered hands;
he sleeps in the garage with the ants & spiders.

Ama² turns off the stove and shouts to her Sons from the kitchen,
reluctant to bother him.

my Brothers roll their tortillas³ and dip them into the caldo⁴, when

a violent shriek from outside disturbs the air;
the garage door thrown shut, sharp.
his eyes of cold broken glass spoke to us;
ours lowered into concealment.

he scowled at his fixed bowl, clicked his tongue, and left.

leftovers taste better with the family. pero⁵
Ama packed tortillas into her bolsa⁶, kissing my hands
as I reached for a hug, leaving for her second job. I
clapped my hands together, desperate for His help, until

I realized: both my parents pray to the same god. a man

with power to help but doesn't is like all men I know.
"what's the matter with—oh crap. he's crying."
mis Hermanos pitied me in silence as they left
their bowls in the sink. the doors closed and I sipped on mi caldo:

frío como los vientos morados de una noche del amor insomnio⁷.

¹ "The boss"; father; a person capable of single-handedly destroying their own family

² "Mother"; a busied apron; subservient to "el jefe"

³ A spoon made of maize native to North and Central America

⁴ An exotic broth full of healing powers; a substitute for medicine

⁵ "But"; depending on skill of orality, can also mean "fart" or "dog"

⁶ "handbag"; full of goods: coins and old receipts; Maria Poppins

⁷ "cold, like the purple winds from a night of sleepless love"; an homage to Lorca, whose ancestors built the walls we climb