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Title

My Scars

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Cry When I Am Dead

Crying one afternoon the reason
I can't remember,
Must have not been important;
my mother hugged me and said
don't cry, cry when I'm dead.
Her usual way of letting me know
everything had a solution;
except death and even then
live has to go on.

Later that month
I saw my mother crying
I asked her what was wrong.
She couldn't explain.
She just felt depressed.
Trying to comfort her sorrow
I told her *don't cry, cry when I am dead.*
She locked her eyes on my words.
Syllables pulling her heartstrings.

She sobbed
as if I had invited her
my own funeral. As if I had shown her
my chosen casket
along with hanging marigolds.
I offered a hug and she locked me so tight I could
feel her reading my heartbeat.

*Do you know that there is no name
for a mother who had lost their child?*

*I won't cry when you're dead,
I will be buried with you.*

My Scars

Pan sizzles danger
as blazing oil pops little crisps of heat.
No tengas miedo.
My mom tells me -not to be afraid-
as I hide behind the counter.
She travels the kitchen
with such ease
dominating the mad oil
and patiently waiting
for the enchiladas to fry.
Cowardly I try to learn,
but a drop of oil pierces my skin
and I dash behind the counter. She laughs.
como vas a concinarle a tu esposo?
How are you going to cook for your husband?
My jaw clenches
and I can feel the humidity of the stove.
She is joking. My frustration is not,
as flashbacks of generations
of women serving flicker
like the blue flames reaching out of the sizzling pan.
Trying to determine the winning words to spill
I remain silent.
She tells me to learn for my own good.
I stare at the tiny red blister on my arm
then at my mother
wondering how many oil scars she has.
Looking at her exhausted eyes
like mirrors documenting her late nights
waiting for my father
to arrive, wanting approval for her homemade meal,
mopping and dusting
the specks of tradition back into place.
I swallow my voice
and let her continue the lesson;
she has more scars than I.

The oil burns,
but oil burns won't be my scars.
My scars will be paper cuts.
My scars will be pen marks;
and my scars will be

flaring stories and burning verses.