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JESSI ELANA AARON

ORACIÓN, OR THE WOMAN WHO LOST HER CHILD

Alive with contradictions
vomit and hunger
I am ashamed of my overzealous
cigarette tongue
spilling confessions
to compassionate and distant ears,
hold me, hold me,
and I will cringe at your touch.
Do not come to me
there are no answers here.

And I say
bendita eres entre todas las mujeres
and I say
ruega por nosotros
and I say
ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte
and she is silent
and I say Amen.

And I miss you.

They tell me
you are pale and plain
your curls a bit too wild
your smile awkward and funny
and I am just a girl
the innocuous primitive
a white man's fantasy,
imagining you my long-lost god.

Y bendito el fruto
el fruto secreto
which fell from the tree
to rot not yet ripe
the last of its kind,
and the tree wept
for its sacrifice,
turning its branches cold
and its bark tough,
and I wept for the tree
de tu vientre.

I whisper
toma mi alma con todas sus penas
y alegrías
she is silent
I say Gloria
and you have already turned away.

MARIGOLDS

It has been five years
since I helped you pick the fullest marigolds.
Digging your maroon fingernails
into the green plastic bucket,
pillows of yellow and orange,
you held each one out to me
cupping it tenderly in your palm
like an offering.
"This one?" you would ask,
eyes holding back secrets and tears.
When I said, "yes, yes, that one"
you would smile softly.

That night we shared a cigarette
under the palm tree and red sky,
bundled tight and standing close
because you were friolenta like me,
blowing the smoke of our transparent agony
into a November California wind,
the incense for my father
and other muertos we remembered
but did not speak of.

Hiciste una calaca,
a mask you held to your face,
and I a sugar skull with flowers for eyes
which I held awkwardly in my weak fingers,
wanting to show you
how close I have always been to death.

The next Day of the Dead,
you were a recent ghost,
your fantasy realized,
your skull open and buried
under eucalyptus trees
because you always liked the way they smelled.
I made no altar that year.
Alone and empty,
I needed no sugar substitute in my fingers
to know how to miss you.

This year, I smoke alone,
imagining your secret smile and pale fingers,
and in my dreams I visit you
with marigolds
to help you choose the prettiest
orange and yellow pillows
to warm the stone of your grave
and bring you home again.