

Dream In Which I Return Home

at dawn you rise from bed
a newborn ghost
wake in your childhood home
the night is a blue song
you wrap yourself in
there's something to be said
about nostalgia
but this is not that dream
the moon screeches
vomits indigo
you cup palmfuls of dirt
swallow grime and good earth
pink paisley curtains spill
out of your parents'
bedroom window
like a butchered tongue
your parents lay
two empty hyphens
and you, a tiny comma,
bundled between them—
the woman who taught you
how to love

a man like your father
the man who taught you to love
a woman for her silence
you scissor their faces
out of every memory
and the moon is a swarm
of gnats and the house is a grave
and your parents are piles
of corpses and you're a girl
excavating for them.

Dream In Which My Father Asks For Forgiveness

I push you into a lake
with no doors.
Your mouth opens;
a chorus of death.

I walk into a room full of
burned black spoons.
The smell of crack lingers
like paint. You're high.
You chew on your tongue.
Glassy-eyed, numb
as a motherfucker.
A look I've seen
in a thousand replaced yous.
I take your makeshift pipe-coke-can
and run. You chase me.
A black lion with no eyes.

I walk through
an indigo door.
The day is gone.
Gnats fall
from the sky
like bullets.
Once, I told you
there's a pill

that stops
the cravings.
*¿Quién te dijo
que quiero
parar de tomar?*
Once, you told me
you stopped smoking
crack. I didn't believe
you. But I wanted to.

I restitch your youth.
13-yr-old boy.
Face full of acne.
Drunk for the first time.
Your friends drop you off
at your front door.
Blacked out,
brink of death.
Was that the origin
of your undoing?

You resurface from the lake. Your mouth—a blade.
I'm a freshman when you tell me how you dream
of killing yourself. Leave the car exhaust running.
Garage door shut. *Es rápido, no causa dolor.*
You put a lot of thought into killing yourself.
You shouldn't have confessed your death wishes to me.
By then, your fuckery was normal.
I'm a sophomore when you drag a kitchen knife
across your bare belly. Scratches swarm your skin
like a child's Etch A Sketch. You were never parent
enough to pretend you were OK.

The sky folds itself
into a prayer.
We're in Juárez, outside
my abuelito's home.

You point a gun
at my face and shoot.
This isn't the first time
you'll try to kill me
in nightmare.
This isn't the last time
I'll be scared of you.

In this dream you ask for forgiveness.
Your body floats on a lake,
but you never make it to the shore.
Your body bursts into ashes.

I etch your name on a cactus
before scattering your bits
amongst the thorns.

In this dream I forgive you.
In this dream we're both better people.

My Mother Crawls Out Of The Ocean

Her large breasts swing carelessly. Her blonde hair, liquid gold, falls like strands of sedated seaweed past her hips. She oozes the freedom of a deranged woman. She doesn't give a fuck. She opens her mouth and pulls out a wedding ring.

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The dress was a thoughtless gift from my father. *Estaba en venta*, he said before giving it to her. I loved the dress. Because of the print. Tiny peaches—rows and rows of them frozen in a field of cerulean. She thought it was tacky and cheap. Like him. The day he finally left us, she gutted the dress from the closet, determined to rip it. And oh, how it billowed like lungs expanding for a deep breath. Her scissors sliced the cheap fabric. Snip. Snip. Snip. And oh, how wonderfully the pieces fell. Like murdered parrots circumcised from the sky.

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She was right. About the dress. About him. After he left, I knew she was never wrong about anything. Especially men.

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The ocean crescendos into song. I pluck a pearl out of her ear and she laughs. She places the ring in my hand and says, *No necesitas a un hombre para ser feliz hija*, then spits out a glob of phlegm and salt before diving into that roaring blue.