

Daughter's Grief

(after Louise Glück, "Adult Grief")

Because your mother called you a burden
for being a child, slammed your face
into the mush of food she hated making for you
and reduced your worth every time you passed by
another girl remarking *how much prettier* you were,
you learned to shield yourself
pushing away whatever hardened thing
into unseen wounds.

For this you write confessions to strangers
you will never meet.

For this you discard keys from doors
you have locked.

If there was ever a moment to reveal yourself,
it would be now
to your dying mother going on and on
about her sacrifices to raise you.
But the sting of the mush lingers
and you swallow knowing
whatever she made you endure
will not pass on to your daughter.

Ring of Fire

On the last day we held each other
you held back wanting to say so much
to your seven-year-old grandchild
on the history that was to come, longer
than the longest night, longer than any
amount she could count on her fingers,
hundreds of years of borders of conflict
zones of north and south divisions between
mothers and fathers, parents and grandparents,
immigrants and citizens, then and now—
unable to forecast the suicides, the midnight
stroke circumventing dreams and light,
knowing the wounds of missed promises
lost to posturing and lies, knowing at least
for the earthquake we stuck to a plan: Together,
arms over arms, bodies over smaller
bodies, step by step huddling through a hall
of shattering glass, underground tremors
threatening to rip every wire and wall apart,
our survival willed forward against seismic forces,
magnitude 7.8—the big one—March 3rd, 1985,
you would later remind me, your voice an echo
on the crackling landline, of our family feat
on a sunny Sunday, not a menacing cloud
in the pacific sky—for those few moments,
in the palm of Mother Nature all we had
was each other, far from the ruptures of adult
relationships, far from the early rifts of divorce.

Who were you to confess
to the one you loved best?
Who were you when she left?

You walked alone night after long night,
candle after candle burned, succumbing
to the ancient curse coursing through
El Libertador de America's sword striking
foes in battle, bitter victory one win away,
unification no matter the cost, the pill of
resistance fiery until his last breath. You must
have known the indelible stain of blood spilled—
you must have known the mortal burden of
generational fractures. After all, we are from
the land of volcanoes and labored miracles.