

# Vanessa Borjon

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Selected as the recipient  
of the *Reclaiming Space Award*

abuelita's earring  
gold knock-off  
*dios te bendiga*  
Manuela a la derecha, holy mother  
Isaias a la izquierda, temptress  
16 year old burn wound  
the city of Chicago  
dirt-water fish  
love-line

\*

azul  
the color of mourning, the blue house  
where my sister began her cycle.  
the color of prayer, every night  
my grandmother's eager trot into my bedroom.  
the color of my hands after she squeezed them  
too tight, *una vez mas*, she'd say,  
*tenemos que rezar.*

\*

rojo  
the cherry tree in our front yard,  
which protected our stonecut virgen de guadalupe,  
was cut in half during a rainstorm.  
hit perfectly by symmetrical lightning.  
*our watch dog has died,*  
my father announced.  
and the boys across the street stopped coming  
to pick the cherries, the only thing between us  
was la virgen's cold offering.  
no more bruise-red  
bombs.

\*

mi papa warmed up our tortillas  
en la chimenea.  
we have VHS footage of this:  
i had just been born, it was early fall  
and there was frost on the windows.  
my father in his swim trunks and i am  
in my baby carriage, warmed by the fire.  
he flips the tortillas quickly,  
a skill which turns the hands rough  
from touching so much fire, which i eventually will inherit.  
my mother is the one recording and she surprises him,  
*mi amorcito*, she calls.  
he forgets about the tortilla and it burns.  
in the video i am watching the tortilla turn black  
unaware that i may burn similarly,  
a people made of maiz.

\*

verde  
on the highest shelf  
in the cubbard of the dining room  
mis padres kept a roll of bills tightly  
held together by a rubber band. this was before  
bank accounts.  
we were poor, but when i saw them reach  
for the discrete cup, i thought it meant  
excess.

\*

we had a clothes line  
that ran from one side of the yard  
to the other. i loved to press my nose  
into the clean white sheets;  
the fabric softener so faint i could hardly smell it,  
and the scent of wind, which passed through.  
flavored by blackberries and ladybugs.  
sunday mornings felt mystical;  
everything was cleaned.