

"Latino story, Voices of Immigrants" by Arion Carraher-Kang

Beginning.

When, at first, all was dark, beneath the skies of Oaxaca

Only the glow of the kitchen could reach me.

Mamá, in her bright huipil soaked the pork and hummed to son istmeño,

Her motions caught in the sugar speckled light as she worked.

Mamá, who scolded me for clumsily coating myself in flour.

Mamá, who told me,

told me I was her little angel.

That "No one can ever take that away from you."

She kissed me on the temple

And sent me to

My papá, who whispered to me,

mi niño, my child,

Do you see there, the stars how they shine in your name?.

I stared past his finger into the night.

Where papá?

He laughed.

"Of course, Francisco, you are one who is free

A star above the world.

You don't need to see to know its there."

el estío

The morning struck violently in the summer,

Bleeding orange on the horizon, the rind broken from the sun

turning sticky,

peeling back the pooling shade

as it rose above lazy clouds.

My sister Amalure and I would play,

Running through Mercado Benito Juárez

Our bare feet tapping the ground as the stones seared our skin.

Only in the house or beneath the Árbol del Tule was there an escape,

The coolness sinking into us as we panted.

There we would sit,

Picking at the coiled Corredor Mexicano.

We knew it could not hurt us.
Only hiss and writhe in the dirt as it escaped into the blaze.

comida para el alma
Every week
on our way through the market,
I would clutch Mamá's list, damp in my dusty hands,
As my sister pulled at my arms
hoping to see the rushed, half slanted instructions.

*2 sacos de masa, 1 pollo del simpático carnicero.
1 bolsa de plátano deja un poco de mantequilla*

My sister and I would work quickly,
awaiting the warmth of the kitchen that seeped into us.
Drenching us in the spirit of the Mole that had been simmering for hours.
We would stare in wonder as Mamá reached about,
Throwing Everything into the pot
The chiles, the spices, the sweet fruits, the sour tomatillos, the nuts which helped thicken the
sauce.
At the end, Mamá would add the chocolate.
Turning the muck a wonderful deep shade of brown,
Like the earth, softened by rain.
Its scent wafting through the building, sticking to the walls,
and out into the darkening skies.

bajo las estrellas
Beneath the stars, mijo, you are beneath your stars. See how they shine in your name.

But papá, we have come so far. So far from home.
Whose stars are these? Where is Mamá? Where is Amalure?

Hush now we are close, very close. Soon we will be home. Soon we will be free.

But then I was still, un niño tonto, a silly little boy.
I could not take to heart the meaning of freedom, I had always *been* free.
I prayed silently and clutched papá's hand as he lead me through the night.

I called to my stars one last time.

trabajo

The industrial light flickered,

Casting dim,

lazy tendrils of light

That sat and vanished from the peeling plaster eggshell walls of the restaurant.

Here, there was no comfort of my memories.

I never felt the warm glow of the kitchen,

never saw

Mamá's pursed lips as she danced.

Never felt the food embrace me.

Not again.

I felt spiritless as I worked.

Sólo

I guess I am like my father.

We share our hair, our eyes, our memories, and our dreams.

We had melded together.

So,

as I sat alone,

Older now, but not old enough.

I realized,

Mamma was wrong.

All these years being free had stripped me.

Now my silhouette filled a foggy mirror, No halo, no smile.

Barely like an angel.