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Cuando mi madre habla

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Look at how she smiles.
A grin that took years to carve out of stone
Is taken for granted by strangers
Who try and pry her mouth open
So that it too, can be
Properly colonized.

When my mother speaks en su lengua
The timid lady,
Voice low and slow,
Disappears
And the words corren out of su boca
In a litany
Like sus palabras are a wild fire
Catching wind
Raging
Across the state of California.
My mother thinks in two voices.
One in which she is una reina
And the other,
Where people look at her
Like she is dumb,
Uneducated,
Y sucia.
Ella sabe las palabras
That claw at her heart.
She knows what they mean,
As they dig at the roots
She once proudly claimed.
Her hand clutches too tightly
Around my 6-year-old wrists,
When she meets my teachers.
They talk to us,
And I cannot
Figure out,
which one of us
Is supposed to be the child.
I want to scream that,
They should listen to
The music that comes from her mouth
When we are home
And how it sounds como un río

Rushing through las montañas
Mi Madre,
Es una diosa.
She cuts herself down
From the branches of the trees
So that she can speak
With people like you.
Cuando mi madre habla inglés,
It is like watching Prometheus
Eaten alive
After giving humans
The chance to live.
Forced to chew rocks in her mouth,
When my mother speaks english,
Be grateful that she is speaking english,
Because she brings herself down
So that
You,
Can feel comfortable.