

Rossy Evelin Lima*
Illustrations by Karen López Murillo**

To Say Goodbye

If leaving requires a farewell, I will swallow the urge to tell my grandmother that I am a fruit from her tree. By the riverbank, I see my wet clothes and know they will become a refuge for vermin. But not my grandmother's dress. The red dress in the photograph I keep, clung to her waist, a lantern belly that was preparing to give life to my mother. The red dress, infused with her hair's swaying melody, worn out by the sea's relentless kiss.



II
There is no photo where we gaze at each other, as if she could keep me safe from the truths she carried while sitting on that rock, sweeping the sands of time. Each photograph is a backdrop of her retreat, her mestiza profile—a silent sentinel to the horizon, foreshadowing the journey I had yet to take, the halves of a life spent returning.

III
If my farewell demands an offering, I will search in that new land for my grandmother's dress. A piece, even just a piece, of the porous fabric that covered her. A piece, like the love of a sailor who continues to light a candle for her memory each year. I will search, as one seeks shelter from a storm, for her dress, her smile, the void she left in her children, the longing

to return to my land and belong once more. From her, I seek a garment as an offering. This path carved into my bones tells me I'm the flesh of her story, yet in my grasp lies only the quiet of her absence. To say farewell, I need my grandmother's dress, a blind map that will guide me toward the corridors of memory lost and my future.

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In the Shadow's Fold

In the darkness, no light dares to touch, the winds are thick enough to drown in, there is no voice—no flowers or altars to pray for what was lost. I am just a seed, tucked in a shadow's fold. They made me forget the warmth of maternal love. In place of eyes, I have two holes, deaf holes whose darkness fly, starving for the scent of cempaxúchitl. I crossed without you.



II
They clawed you away with filthy hands—five sharp talons, furrowing my identity, a tug, a sear, a howling burn. In its wake, a scar screamed red, repeating its verdict: the filth of stones put in place to separate our bodies.

III
There is no light, only water bearing the dead. You see me grounded, bare, gazing upon my dirt-streaked face, my hands in bare flesh from sifting through rocks—the vault holding the silenced stories of my people. You find me—in this country closed around me like a coffin.

IV
The most beautiful part of my body is the one I clean with flower offerings. Every shimmering version of myself has died. Now you see me, Venerated Mother, and instead of running into your arms, I ask you why you allowed it. My name has vanished from the sky where your constellation still burns. You see me like this and you run, Tonantzin, to hide, Tonantzin, to try to forget me, Tonantzin, and without looking back, the river hears you say—Oh, my poor child.