

SHE PASSED IN THE LATE EVENING
I GOT HOME AS FAST AS LIGHTNING
BIKING THROUGH TRAFFIC AS
SOON AS MY AUNT TEXTED ME
WITH THE NEWS. SHE HAD STOPPED
ASKING FOR MEDICINES...

THE WHOLE FAMILY CRAMMED
INTO THE TINY HEALING ROOM
AT THE BACK OF THE SHOP,
ALL BROWN FACES AND TEAR-
-STAINED SWOLLEN EYES. THE
BED COVERED IN BLESSINGS
AND SAGE, COUNTLESS MANY
PRAYERS LITTERING THE ALTAR

MY LITTLEST COUSIN ANITA
CRYING IN HER MOTHER'S ARMS.
NANI CALLED OUT TO HER AND
TOOK ANITA'S LITTLE HANDS
IN HERS, "SHH'ING" HER TEARS.
THE CHILD QUIT SCREAMING
AND THE REST OF US LET OUT
A SIGH OF RELIEF, LOOKING
AT THIS GODDESS-LIKE WOMAN
WITH HER LONG GLORIOUS



SOMEHOW BIRTHED US ALL . SHE
WAS OUR BEGINNING , AND WE
WERE ALL TERRIFIED TO WITNESS
THE END OF HER STORY . IT WAS
THE SADDEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL
THING I HAVE EVER SEEN IN
MY LIFE .

THEN SHE TURNED TOWARDS
ME . I CAME TO ~~WALK~~ THE



EDGE OF THE BED. SHE //
SMILED HER THOUSAND YEAR SMILE
AND STROKED MY FACE WITH //
FINGERTIPS AS GENTLE AS
BUTTERFLY WINGS ^(g) _(s)

= ANALISA" /

SHE CALLED OUT
FOR HELP, STRAINING TO
POINT AT SOMETHING ON THE
HIGH CABINET. MY COUSIN NENT
TO THE SHELF AND BROUGHT
HER THE SMALL CHEST SHE WAS
ASKING FOR. FROM AROUND
HER NECK NANI PULLED A
CHAIN WITH A TINY GOLDEN
KEY ON IT

UNLOCKING

THE OLD CHEST SHE TOOK OUT
A LARGE **BLACK FEATHER**
TIED TOGETHER WITH A BRIGHT
FLASHING STONE...



I HELD OUT
SHAKING HANDS TO
HER WRINKLED TAN ONES.

THE MOMENT THE FEATHER
TOUCHED MY HANDS I FELT AS
IF I WAS HOLDING THE WEIGHT
OF THE WORLD. SHE WHISPERED
TO ME: PARA MI HIJA DE CORAZON PURO

THE TEARS WOULDNT STOP FLOWING
DOWN MY FACE,

SHE PASSED NOT LONG AFTER,
SLEEP OF THE LIVING TURNING
STEADILY INTO ANOTHER DEEPER
SLEEP. I CRIED. I'M STILL
CRYING. I'M NOT SURE IF
I EXPECT TO STOP. I'VE BEEN
SITTING HERE ON THE BACK PORCH
SINCE IT HAPPENED, TRYING TO
REMEMBER HER COMPLETELY
BEFORE SHE RECEDES ANY
FURTHER INTO THE PAST...

THE FEATHER IS ON THE BED
WAITING FOR ME. I FEEL
LIKE SHE MUST HAVE GIVEN

URING IT TO ME FOR ONE OF HER
ENORMOUS: COSMIC REASONS
THAT I CANNOT HOPE TO MAKE
SENSE OF WITHOUT HER. MY WHOLE
LIFE THIS WOMAN HAS BEEN AS
MUCH AS A MOTHER TO ME. I
FEEL ADRIFT~~~~~.

((COME BACK TO ME
COME BACK TO
ME A THOUSAND
WAYS.