bombs, the concrete. I think of the stories I'll tell her cuando regreso. I'll show her pictures of my room, but avoid all the messy parts. I'll tell her about the two gringas at work today who screamed at me to "go back" to the countries I've only seen in pictures and imagined in memories. I'll tell her that I asked them, "which one?" I'll laugh. She won't.

DAILY RICE

You say my name and, in the same breath,
whisper names of lands that I've never been to.
You taught me to cup my tongue on the first syllable, ready to eat the daily rice:
"Poquito porque es bendito," you'd say—right after, "ya comí, ustedes comen."

You didn't give me your hair, your skin, or even the color of your eyes,
but I can see our homes in them—
the ones they live in now. Without us.

You know, I saw him cry for the first time in that same darkness.
I stared into it as I heard the sobs.
I wasn't looking for him, but for people who have died and forgotten us,
who hide behind mirrors blocked off with black cloth—
heavy: like border, like black sky, like wrinkle, like every held breath and desperate whisper.

DREAMING OF HAIR

I was raised quietly.
I knew all too well how a glance, a word, a gesture
could turn my body into a battleground.