The Vernal Pool

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the immurement of tradition
By Daniel “Xetini” López

mi cultura, as it was:

el Jefe holds the family down with steel toed boots & wintered hands; he sleeps in the garage with the ants & spiders.

Ama turns off the stove and shouts to her Sons from the kitchen, reluctant to bother him.

my Brothers roll their tortillas and dip them into the caldo, when a violent shriek from outside disturbs the air; the garage door thrown shut, sharp. his eyes of cold broken glass spoke to us; ours lowered into concealment.

he scowled at his fixed bowl, clicked his tongue, and left.

leftovers taste better with the family. pero Ama packed tortillas into her bolsa, kissing my hands as I reached for a hug, leaving for her second job. I clapped my hands together, desperate for His help, until I realized: both my parents pray to the same god. a man
with power to help but doesn’t is like all men I know.
“what’s the matter with—oh crap. he’s crying.”
mis Hermanos pitied me in silence as they left
their bowls in the sink. the doors closed and I sipped on mi caldo:

frío como los vientos morados de una noche del amor insomnio⁷.

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¹ “The boss”; father; a person capable of single-handedly destroying their own family
² “Mother”; a busied apron; subservient to “el jefe”
³ A spoon made of maize native to North and Central America
⁴ An exotic broth full of healing powers; a substitute for medicine
⁵ “But”; depending on skill of orality, can also mean “fart” or “dog”
⁶ “handbag”; full of goods: coins and old receipts; Maria Poppins
⁷ “cold, like the purple winds from a night of sleepless love”; an homage to Lorca, whose ancestors built the walls we climb