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## JESSI ELANA AARON

### ORACIÓN, OR THE WOMAN WHO LOST HER CHILD

Alive with contradictions  
vomit and hunger  
I am ashamed of my overzealous  
cigarette tongue  
spilling confessions  
to compassionate and distant ears,  
hold me, hold me,  
and I will cringe at your touch.  
Do not come to me  
there are no answers here.

And I say  
bendita eres entre todas las mujeres  
and I say  
ruega por nosotros  
and I say  
ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte  
and she is silent  
and I say Amen.

And I miss you.

They tell me  
you are pale and plain  
your curls a bit too wild  
your smile awkward and funny  
and I am just a girl  
the innocuous primitive  
a white man's fantasy,  
imagining you my long-lost god.

Y bendito el fruto  
el fruto secreto  
which fell from the tree  
to rot not yet ripe  
the last of its kind,  
and the tree wept  
for its sacrifice,  
turning its branches cold  
and its bark tough,  
and I wept for the tree  
de tu vientre.

I whisper  
toma mi alma con todas sus penas  
y alegrías  
she is silent  
I say Gloria  
and you have already turned away.

### MARIGOLDS

It has been five years  
since I helped you pick the fullest marigolds.  
Digging your maroon fingernails  
into the green plastic bucket,  
pillows of yellow and orange,  
you held each one out to me  
cupping it tenderly in your palm  
like an offering.  
"This one?" you would ask,  
eyes holding back secrets and tears.  
When I said, "yes, yes, that one"  
you would smile softly.

That night we shared a cigarette  
under the palm tree and red sky,  
bundled tight and standing close  
because you were friolenta like me,  
blowing the smoke of our transparent agony  
into a November California wind,  
the incense for my father  
and other muertos we remembered  
but did not speak of.

Hiciste una calaca,  
a mask you held to your face,  
and I a sugar skull with flowers for eyes  
which I held awkwardly in my weak fingers,  
wanting to show you  
how close I have always been to death.

The next Day of the Dead,  
you were a recent ghost,  
your fantasy realized,  
your skull open and buried  
under eucalyptus trees  
because you always liked the way they smelled.  
I made no altar that year.  
Alone and empty,  
I needed no sugar substitute in my fingers  
to know how to miss you.

This year, I smoke alone,  
imagining your secret smile and pale fingers,  
and in my dreams I visit you  
with marigolds  
to help you choose the prettiest  
orange and yellow pillows  
to warm the stone of your grave  
and bring you home again.