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## Of Motherhood, Caldo y Atole

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Of Motherhood, *Caldo y Atole*

by Amanda Rose García

Heat stroked pastures lie scorned and sun-scorched Skies  
a deep auburn near eight pm  
Reminds me my heart fears all but running  
But tonight,  
We are home  
Tonight, *caldo* on the stove.  
Muted moans lurk, pent up creeks of Hardwood floors  
The leaking faucet contests

How heavy the burden of a water bill On  
the mind of a woman eighty feet tall,  
No, rather eighty-four years old  
Grey and weary, beads of turquoise dress her neck  
Back bent, she creeps to tighten the faucet best she can  
Her calloused hands pour me a thick serving of *atole*  
Hot from the stove, worn but steady pot, rusting  
Has seen many a cure cooked and boiled  
For bruises and heartaches alike

*Atole*, now sliding past the lump in my throat,  
Warms my chest for a moment  
Heat rushes through my arms and  
To the pit of my stomach  
Lingering like heat does when the heater works  
Last Christmas remembers me this warm but  
A quick draft sneaks past cracked adobe  
Whispers the hairs on the back of my neck to a rigid attention  
Her voice raspy but certain as words wobble out slowly

*“Todavía eres madre”*

Words pierce my ears so sharp I believe they start to Bleed, or otherwise, heat now drips out of me  
Down the side of my face  
My eyes drooping, shift toward the stuttering hand on the clock My pulse lapping the tick, neck now  
pounding

*“No importa lo que digan”*

She prepares a bowl of *caldo*

*Caldo*, her favorite

Pushes us from summer to winter

From fields yellow and rich

To fields lifeless, unforgiving

*Caldo*, a labor, reward for hard work

What is it then when all your hard work has been

Mourning a loss the size of 38 weeks in your ribcage?

Perhaps insufferable.

Skies of auburn, now dimming, reflect from the window seal

Dusty and dreadful from dragging in draft

*Atole*, now but residue residing in an empty glass,

Thickens the lump in my throat,

She is not wrong...

They talk.

“How can the bloodline of a healer not keep life,  
not foster a womb warm and giving enough?”

The clock reads seven minutes until eight

Seven minutes is an eternity when all you have is

The coursing time through you,

Time which has evaded you

But seven minutes,

Seven minutes old is nearly

Four-hundred piercing breaths,

If they could only reach past the

Lump in my throat,

Seven minutes old is

Not even the blink of an eye,

Welling with tears, with fury

Furiously, blood red skies burning through me

I wonder, is it my blood spilling over

Or has the dust choked the sun?

All that was left of me,

A hole now too throbbing to nurse

With even a bowl of *caldo*

Cold from catching draft on the counter

I rest my head on the shoulder of a woman eighty feet tall  
A woman who has carried life into this world  
More times than I could.  
More times than I could count now with tears rushing forward  
She holds my heart back from running

“*Suéltalo*” she says,

The pastures could use the rain.

**Amanda Rose García** is a third-year student studying Spanish and Chicana/o Studies at the University of New Mexico. Throughout her experience in higher education, Amanda has prioritized reconnecting with her own roots and building community, as a third-generation Mexican American. Growing up in New Mexico provides her with a unique cultural perspective unlike any other in the country, which drives much of her academic, personal, and community work. “Of Motherhood, *Caldo y Atole*” is a piece that, both, encapsulates her academic and personal goals, while also painting a vivid image of her cherished home state in the beautiful Southwest. This poem, based on the experience of a friend, considers the cultural realities of rural New Mexican life, including hardships of living off the land, *curanderismo* practices, New Mexican food traditions, and the importance of family and *querencia* (a love of home or place).