

Guineítos

for Grandpa

You were asleep when your parents left.
Stunted fruit, bruised but such ambitious taste.
Stocked sweetness, your humor always a trauma.

How you make everyone laugh, peel
your skin for fear of naming Mayagüez,
the orphanage I only just learned about.

Twice a year, I was your steady mano,
inspecting ripeness as an exercise in trust.
Our shared hunger for home and its risk

that day, when I tempted your age, stoic
elder, weight of abandon, seeing the run
in my eyes (so many years before your cane).

When you caught me, love was your shackle,
the Bronx just another lawless campo.
You, feral sweet thing I could point to

never knowing depression was a road raucous
with laughter. Costello, Sanford, Chaplin
your trinity tongue, hanging by the bushels

we peeled at the kitchen table in silence.
The next day, you said *If you run away*
your memory runs away too.

*

My memory runs away into
the next day, I said something to Noel
but the kitchen table becomes a silence.

My trinity, hanging at the bushels
of laughter: Costello, Sanford, Chaplin
all knowing depression is a road raucous

feral, and sweet. Pointing toward
the Bronx, I see just another lawless campo.
When I catch him, love is my shackle;

in his eyes I see the years of cane fields.
Weight of abandonment, I run without sight.
That day, tempting my own small age,

my hunger for home and all its risk,
ripeness just an exercise in trust.
Twice a year, I can't steady my hands.

That orphanage I never tell the kids about,
even my skin afraid of naming Mayagüez.
I make everyone laugh and they don't peel

back the layers of humor, of trauma.
Was I a stunted fruit? Bruised and ambitious.
I was asleep when my parents left.