

Pupusas

BY REYES RAMIREZ

the pupusa is a portrait
 of an honest earth:
 the coarse burns continents,
 the auroral dough a sea.
 water joined masa through tumult
 & sphered, flattened then crowned,
 filled with meat & milk then smoothed,
 heat birthed & bitten.
 no, the pupusa is an homage
 to the laborer's backhand
 where scars simmer & settle,
 strawberry skin browns.
 sweated flesh crackles on steaming metal,
 grease singing smoke loud then sweet over & over,
 flipped & rested, an iris weepy then dry,
 ashen islands form & a back stiffens.
 no, the pupusa is a documentation
 of every pecado,
 the taut pink palate
 a receipt for indulgence.
 a sheet of young wood pulp dims,
 then an emergence of weighty shadows.
 a sycamore pith rises & splits
 & spits a globe of queso.
 no, the pupusa is a bulging mirror
 to this sleepless face. examine
 the wrinkle bowls under each eye & find
 another tired eye under another tired eye.
 the cream sol bulges then sombers,
 sunspots & scabs black;
 what can this light nourish
 but a body ripe with eonic exhaustion?
 no, the pupusa is a portrait
 of this life, crusting & breaking
 with every lick & tooth, the desire & gift
 of jarabe yielding to the shape of a belly.
 crack open the soft disc egg
 & study its ivory thick blood & tender marron,
 stretching like a timeline of grief,
 & lap the fresh veins.

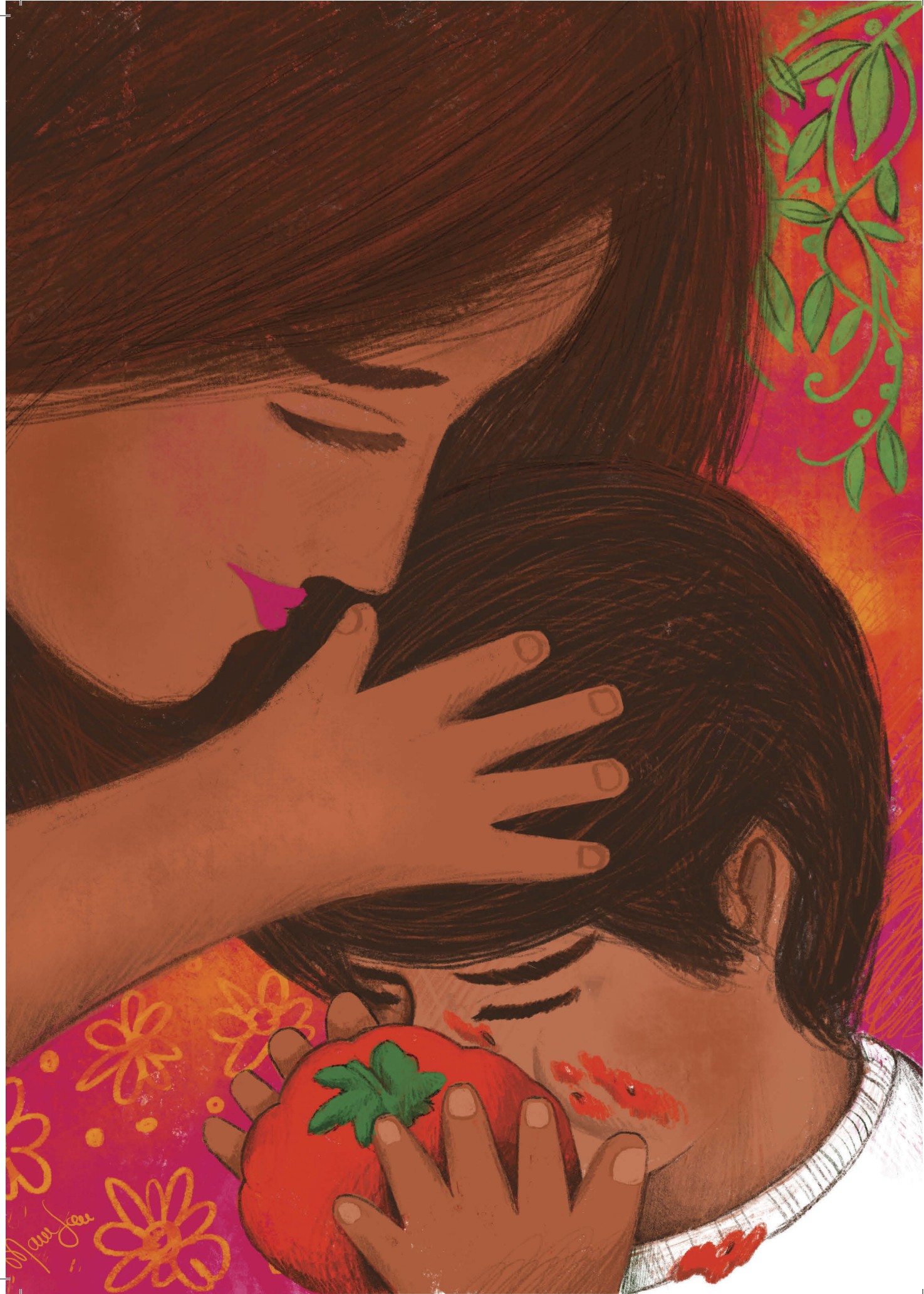
Pozole

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examine handsome pork & note the vulnerabilities
the ear's blush, the feet's foggy tendons,
the ruby pierna's coat of grasa,
a lightning of white cartilage.
strip the gummy fat & know
what must be made bare
place them all in la olla with streaks of coaled tears
full of agua herviendo.
what is any sabor but a flesh boiled
until clouds of loam float
to the water's screaming surface
like souls to rapture?
skim the sputtering espuma. add ajos, onion, salt, bullion,
whatever may grace throat & stomach
with wax-thick broth.
a recipe is a litany
of what has nourished
the history of your becoming.
stir so nothing sinks & sticks
open latas of white hominy, handwash them
like spilled teeth, like nascent pearls,
like orbs of wisdom
from the dead.
continue boiling. continue waiting. continue living.
remove what can no longer give: cebolla, garlic, doubt.
add bay leaf. add oregano. add what cannot be said.
taste this labor. taste what's been tasted before you,
what has provided clarity beyond hunger,
what has been prepared to the singing
of those who cannot hear your music,
by those now in unwakeable sleep,
through your mother's mother's hope,
through the instinct to reach across a time
& say You are here.
Is it possible to ever be alone?



Maria



Maria Jara

X. Hijo, please

BY REYES RAMIREZ

I don't like it when you say things
and you mean them. Cosas como
'no,' 'I don't care,' and 'ya.'
As if you want to go into another world.

Yo recuerdo when you were chiquitito:
you would eat tomatoes with picatitos
that wore away el piel,
chunky jugo trickling out.

You would never talk,
masticando tomatoes to the center,
never blinking, a stain of pulp roja
remained around tu cheeks y teeth.

Nunca did you make efforts to clean it off,
so I leaned in to wipe your face
and I would laugh and smile and say
mi niño, niño mío.

Reyes Ramirez is a Houston-based writer, editor, curator, and organizer of Mexican and Salvadoran descent. These poems are excerpted with permission from El Rey of Gold Teeth, his new collection from Hub City Press.