



# *Carne Fría: A Love Story*

BY EMMA TRELLES

Her strip of a kitchen the surface  
Of the sun when she cooked in the eternal  
Summer of our city of reinvention. Miami  
Still shunned us then, if you can imagine  
A place without the persistent glint of Spanish  
And the way café levitates every rough juncture.  
She never spoke English and what she might have  
Understood about that time was buried beneath her  
Eyes, alive even now in a hand-painted photograph  
Where I keep her near my own little stove.  
I never saw my grandmother make it,  
The meat arrived silvered and flecked  
With olives and the knowledge of a woman  
Of obsidian will, who survived by refusing not to.  
There are years since when she still visits me  
Circled in blue flame, and she looks  
Pleased with her unseen arrangement,  
A home where she knows every tongue.  
I ask her about my uncle Tito, if he is there  
With his books about astral projection and his chess board,  
If the place she now lives has the same island light of where  
She was born and where she died. She shines and says nothing.  
She always preferred to listen, her face open to me, soft  
As gardenias she cut from the yard and set in a cup of water  
Beside my bed. I ask her what the recipe was  
For her carne fría, if I will again taste  
Its cold and wondrous salt. To this, she lifts  
Her hand and presses it to my heart.

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*Emma Trelles is the ninth Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara, California, and in August 2022, she was named one of twenty-two Poet Laureate Fellows across the country by the Academy of American Poets. She is the daughter of Cuban immigrants and the author of Tropicalia (University of Notre Dame Press), winner of the Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize.*