

JJ PEÑA

you carry the love from others in your hair

most stories about my tía nieves are about her birth: how she was pushed out covered in snow, winter my grandma didn't want near. that's why my grandma didn't press my tía close to her ribcage — let their geographies crust over each other — that's why my tía was raised by another woman, by another family, hundreds & hundreds of soundtracks away, on uncombed land, where my tía would stomp, stumble, storm, where she'd fall down dripping trees, lay as a dropped peach, twirl hair strands into whirlpools, wonder if you're supposed to find your mother in your hair. what i think my tía believes: you carry the love from others in your hair. the first time i met her, her fingers grazed through my scalp, & she told me in spanish, *your head's not hungry at all. look at all you got inside.* an idea i loved to wonder about, but could never prove, not even when my hair would forest over my ears, root. but i would like for my tía's theory to be true, so that you weren't alone when you killed yourself, so that when you put a bag over your head & your breathing fragiled, you could have heard us as the world slipped away: our love swimming through your curls, at first soft, quiet, & then rowing into a loud, thundering, lullabying hum.