Mechanical God in the Garage

A cracked porcelain cup
expelling blackened bile—
that was how I first understood Papy.

A fragile animal
holding something corrosive
long past the point
of survival.

He moved through the house like a wild boar
with tusks of fractured bone,
snuffling through the mud of his own making,
hooves cracking tile—
a storm wearing the shape of a man.

Beer bottles multiplied around him
like metallic larvae,
silver scaled skins sweating
in the Texas heat.

The television flickered green across his face,
turning it into something aquatic,
half-drowned,
half-feral.

I remember thinking
monsters were not born—

they leaked.

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His eyes,

mangled marbles
rolling
in a flood
of dark sludge.

Nunca miraban
        al mismo mundo
                que yo.

Sometimes
I think he saw another life entirely,
one where borders never cut his tongue,
where English did not bruise his mouth,
where god had not abandoned him

or maybe,

where he abandoned god first.

His voice in the ash-clanged air
of his cigarette,

metal
scraping
bone.

Cada palabra
        un golpe.

Each one landed,
a wrench dropped
from a great height,

He called himself logical.
Said the universe was accident.
Said faith was a crutch
for the weak knees.

But I watched him pray
to the bottom of those bottles,

watched him tilt glass
towards the garage's incandescent sun,
an offering
to a mechanical god
spinning without mercy.

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At night
his grief leaked out sideways.

He would sit on the couch,
clawing at the air
like a desperate crab
caught in a storm of feathers,
muttering numbers,
old addresses,
names of men
I never met.

Once—

he pressed his forehead
to mine.

Breath hot
with whiskey rot.

“No seas como yo.”

His words broke in my hands,
fingers bleeding, I tried to gather them.

I wanted to tell him
I already was—

I—

I—

But instead,

I nodded,

like a child
accepting prophecy.

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There were nights
he became something else entirely—

not boar
not storm

but

a collapsed cathedral.

A man kneeling
inside his own ruin.

Hands covering his face
as if the world were too bright
to survive.

I learned then,

rage
is only grief
wearing armor.

That love
can rot
and still be love.

That a father
can be both

earthquake
and shelter

in the same trembling hour.

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Even now
when glass clinks
in another room,

my spine remembers him—

barbed-wire tenderness,
broken-glass mercy,
the man who taught me

how destruction sounds
from the inside.

And still—

when the night grows teeth
and loneliness presses
its thumb
into my sternum,

I hear Papy's voice
somewhere in the dark.

Not angry,
not drunk.

"Alaba."

And the word
opens in my chest
like a wound

trying
to become

a door.