

Buelita

In my eight year old world,  
I am the moon  
orbiting Buelita,  
my favorite Abuela.

Hummingbird quick,  
Buelita flits  
pristine, precise, powerful.

Shepard's me  
through the bilingual maze.  
Español y Ingles  
spoken together or apart.

Buelita calls me Jamona,  
her lil' ham.  
My secret performances  
for her eyes only.

At dinner, I dance in my chair  
singing and clapping  
uno y dos,  
to cumbias y rancheras.

Later, we gopher the cedar closet.  
Unearth 3 woven palm boxes  
carried on Buelita's head  
from Mexico.  
Their sweet scent surrendered.

Yet, the aroma of copalli resin  
welcomes us to  
our season  
to honor death  
and the cycle of life.

Memories trigger tears of love,  
Mira! Las Calacas!  
Wood sculpted skeletons smirk,  
their happy afterlife  
dancing, & playing music in joyful  
attire.

Buelita hides a new one for me each year.  
Under the sofa? No.  
On top of the chest of drawers? No.  
Mirth dances across Buelita's face.

Aha! Inside the freezer,  
La Catrina!  
Elegant icon of protest,  
wide plumed hat  
frames her Grande Dame glow.

Dusk embraces us.  
La Catrina & I snip  
bunches of marmalade orange  
& lemon yellow marigolds.

Scatter fragrant petals,  
up the tiered altar.  
Bienvenidos familia!  
Welcome home family.

Delicate unveiling of our dead,  
Don Jose y Dona Maria  
in smiling wedding photos.  
Graciela, our cousin  
Cheshire cat grinning at the camera.

Tamales, atole, mole,  
sugar skulls, pan de muerto y aqua  
welcome their tired and hungry  
souls home after their journey.

Copali aromas,  
Marigold perfumes intoxicate.  
We whisper prayers,  
blow kisses  
to our dearly departed.

Buelita and I sing,  
"Every day is a dance with death.  
Live every day as if it were your last one."  
Luminous moon beams.

by Catalina Marie Cantú