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Kinship Poems

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Auntie

Not sanguineous, but salvaged. Not stolen, but saved: a kinswoman found forged in the want of my beginnings by a friend, waylaid. At seventeen, met in the brambles and byways behind IAIA's campus, we compared crimson, drew new continents with our limbs, called no guardian. Basketball boys from a neighboring pueblo, worried, warned that their tribe's word for witch strayed at night. We weren't afraid. Rose from where we lay, undressed the rain. Touched the pressure points of each other's pain. 12 years later I am Auntie to her daughter, son, doing what women do with undone thirst: cultivate stories that begin, "remember when..." I am not Navajo like she, am born of no known clan, but I can tell her children about the time their mommy and I drove out to Spider Rock, and she pointed to the formation's top, where Spider Woman landed first.

Mama

On a darkened stage she calls “mama?” mama I want your skin.
then the animal that is also mother steps into the light and sings.
Both clothed in white, they are one beautiful bone, but mama
reeks and retches, opens her mouth and is vaudeville. a veneer
over value: a child sold to centuries sated by song. *songs sweet,*
songs slung in satchels over the backs of women workers, songs
slipped past the stiff necks of men whose wives rubbed the roundness
off their souls, had children so like them that they are one unbridled bone.

Baby

In small, spoken hours I called you *Beauty Billowing*
before the world could call you bitch, black girl.

Then you fled the technician's sonogram.
I wailed in the hospital bed.

To what elsewhere had you led
us, too few for an exodus?

I leavened the bread.

carrying a child could have made
travel clumsy, a disaster of biblical proportions

and no one to part the sea of reeds for us, just the
small incision on my stomach where the doctor had to cut,

not even a raft lent in a rut. But, baby, we are girls who call
ourselves the damned disaster, dangerous with eyes not downcast.