

THE ARC OF A CURVE

“Opté por el silencio, imitando a la noche y a mi padre.”

—G. Cabrera Infante

I was the one with the blue scarf, the one
with the night rolled up
and cupped in his hands, the one who saw it
all. Even the wind crumbled. I told no one.
I said nothing until tonight, N.
Tonight when the rain was everything
the way the delicate bones of your hands
become everything at times, even in thought.
I've learned to trust my thoughts. You
can tell them anything because they
don't tell anyone, they don't even sigh.
I can change my blue scarf to green.
It's easy: the brain
is still learning to ache like a heart,
but its progress is pathetic.
This is what I think about when I think
about nothing. This
is what I think about when the rain is everything.
N, listen to my small confessions.
This afternoon I dreamed that I dreamed
that the telephone was ringing.
Someone waited at the other end
while I screamed. Someone waited
and said nothing. But I know
what they were thinking:
something about a letter that never comes,
something about the futility of distances
or of the thought of distances. N,
the rain is still everything.

It comes down, feels the house like a hand.
Your hands would run down my cheeks,
fall from my face like rain.
This is memory. This pure silence.
You learn the most from those
you hardly know: back in the brief
days of that other life, my father
taught me that silence is the longest word.

RIVERS, HORSES AND FIREWOOD

Three cold streams come down
from the mountains. They meet
at the bottom and the river begins,
running west after the sun, running
straight. When the road was built
the old bridges were abandoned and
began to fall and ride the current
like firewood on a gentle horse.

My father sold firewood
across the river when he was ten.
He walked by his horse, running
his hands up and down the reins
and thinking of his mother,
how she stayed home, running
her hands up and down her rosary
as if taking her faith by the reins,
selling her soul to God like firewood.

FABLE

It wasn't that long ago. Hurricanes
with the names of women would cross
the island like packs of wildebeest.
Hurricanes with the names of our dead: