

# YOUR GREATEST WEAPON IS HOPE

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We sit face to face on this unmade bed, sharing secrets.  
You are a fun house reflection of my own self,  
my sister's daughter – we are the same blood,  
but we are not the same.  
Your skin is the color of cracked earth,  
of sand dunes kissed by the blazing sun.  
You are all curls and curves and makeup painted on just so.  
Bright pink blush hides the ocean of shame that they've  
forced upon your adolescent body.

That time the teacher sends you to the office  
for letting a sliver of your belly show.  
The boy who feels he has a right to touch every hidden part of you.  
Your mother says school is “safe” and your heart breaks  
because you know math class might as well be a back alley at dusk.  
Into your locker, classmates slip notes written with hateful hands –  
jet black insults that stain like dried blood on silk.  
They tell you to go back home,  
return to a country you've only ever seen  
in the dark eyes of your father when he whispers I love you mija,  
but really means to say: *I wish the world saw you as I do.*

You are one hundred unfinished poems sitting  
on the tip of your mother's tongue.  
In the sweet silence of midnight,

she dreams beautiful words.

But, come morning, there is no pen to write them into being –  
only blank pages and the bitter cold.

Still shaking, you wrap the dawn around those shoulders  
and help your little brother get dressed.

You shovel spoonfuls of oatmeal into this tiny mouth  
and hear the low rumble of a starving soul –  
so busy caring for others that you forgot to feed yourself.

You are the rough hands of your father  
who crossed deserts in nothing but a t-shirt,  
slept three nights with the rattlesnakes so that his children  
could lay under the American sky and call it theirs.

The man on the TV calls him a criminal –  
does it in the name of patriotism and protection and God.  
I cry because the truth is that you're nothing short of holy,  
a miracle surrounded by non-believers.  
So, when they come to build walls,  
we will lay down in the bulldozer's path.

We will not move, but we will scream love.

You will be love. Love will be you.

And in this becoming, you'll finally understand  
that all the words meant to cut your brown flesh  
have made you invincible.

From the ashes emerged a fighter.

Your greatest weapon is *hope*.