

## ***Broken link***

**by Carreen and Brontë de Cárdenas**

Abuela's Spanish is rapid-fire and whiny and dripping with breathy s's  
and when she speaks with her sisters in Miami's marbled hallways  
it's like the clipped sing-song of tropical birds in a cacophony of sound

Sound that reverberates in me, so deep I don't always know it's there  
Words that rise in the rarest moments making me question everything

¿Hablas español?

I don't know. But you'll think sometimes by my accent I do.  
You'll think because my abuela's sounds come out of me sometimes,  
because breakfast table chatter with my father sputters off my tongue,  
that I did that on purpose and those words are mine.

I understand more than I speak, I tell you.  
I understand as a child understands the words coming to them  
like a waterfall rushing over their ears. A cacophony of words  
That I can never reproduce.

If language is the transmission of culture, I must be the broken link  
– a molten mess of different cultures flooded with gibberish  
because my elders took their words off their tongues and lay them with  
the family jewels, locked them up in empty houses for an empty future

We, this mess of words and sounds and bloodlines  
We, the ever searching for home with our mouths  
We, the new generation – the not before, the never after

At least we have this. The kitchen table greetings, the goodbye blessings,  
the rhythm and rise of words of advice and worried "mira" as you forget your keys.  
We'll survive with this and we'll help it to survive.