Mike Young

Clay in Grandma Claire

Your grandma Claire had a thing for maps
and men from New Mexico.

See here in this picture,
the Halloween party?
She jiggles her punch cup with candor,
but a few absent fingers
hide outside the frame --

there's no doubt, little Katie
those fingers, poised on a globe,
tickled a certain desert state.
Why, you can almost touch
the lizards' wet tongues.

And there is your grandpa Raul
looking sour. He's the raven
in the doily farm:
her family's Halloween party,
for which he oiled his hair
and they offered handshakes
they never gave.

But alone, Claire loved him to tell,
and Raul loved her to listen
of November 1st, Día de los Muertos.

No screaming ninjas
with greedy grocery bags,
or moms fret with caution
over razor blades in apples;

only a long line of souls
drawn down from the Catholic church,
hushed on the clay
with candles and night
to sprinkle flowers and cigarettes
upon the other souls.

Tonight, your Grandpa Raul and Grandma Claire
are just pictures.
There’s no doubt, little Katie,
this is clay we visit.
And yes, it is a line too long for maps, but hush:
like us, everyone is here.

We must give them space for light.

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