Nayelly Barrios

On Stealing Your Bones From Mictecacihuatl

Mictecacihuatl hunched nacreous
over your corroded bones
hunched lovingly
her curved back
the moon's glowing spine

Mictecacihuatl
crown of caléndulas
slipping over her eyes
pours herself over your bones

threatens to keep me if I take her bones
your bones

I need your bones for your reliquary
She needs bones to hold up the collapsing sky
I need your bones as relic
She needs bones as a rite of passage
I need something to hold on to
She needs something to pass on

I remind myself she, too, was once
a sacrifice
How her child flesh must have given out
under stone
Her nape swallowed
by dark
Bones crushed like the whimpers
of some helpless animal
All to be keeper of the dead
the keeper of life to come

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I tell her all I want is your spine
I can do with the spine
I can fold it into the cedar box I have carved for you
tuck it away neatly like a scarf

As I walk toward her
my knees begin to give out
my bones begin unshackling
I acquiesce

I say
I only want to know what sound the dead make
going down your throat

She says
you are nothing more than a whisper
nothing more than a star's gasp

echo in the mouth