

Memorial Day

For my father, whose war continued to the end.

Your shrapnel monsters woke you at night, pulled you into Minnesota darkness, placed a pistol in your hand to protect us from Nazis hidden in the woods.

Escape, you whispered, not knowing I listened. I obeyed, but chose my own weapons: rickety planes to Nicaragua flying low over burning sugar cane, landing in abandoned cow pastures. A Montreal spa on Rue de La Montaigne where they massage my head, cut my hair short and edgy, pour me cappuccino.

My tongue does not form your drawn out Norwegian vowels. I embrace Spanish, French, Portuguese, even Russian, random words in Tzeltal.

Once in Havana, soldiers lifted me to the roof of a coliseum to watch the chachachá dancers. Old ladies in folding chairs fanned me, air warm and humid. Afterward I walked the seafront Malecón, wind billowing my dress, finally free of you.

But now I find you everywhere: in my old journals from France, your cuss words in my mouth, the faces of men who straggle into my courtroom every morning. You are still here. And so am I, unable to outrun myself, trapped in your dancer's body, high cheekbones, our blue eyes always gazing somewhere far away.