

*Interlude in
My Mother's Mouth*

by Julio Montalvo Valentin

My Mother has never spoken a word to me.
She is Deaf.
But her love can be heard
in the sizzling of canola oil on her palms,
the splash that is true baptism
for those who pray to Rice.
Her love can be heard
in the snaps of tongue against spoons
as she grinds memory into Sofrito.
Her love can be heard
in the snarls of disappointment
when you don't replace the Sofrito.
Her love can be heard
through the coffee-stained finger tips
that have once bathed me in Boricua drums.
Her love can be heard
in her smacks as they lick
flavor into air and crackle above skin,
the way sin strikes us.
Her love can be heard
 her love can be heard
 her love can be heard
in the wails
when the silence in her ears
matches the eyes of others.

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I ask God to give my Mother voice;
to hear *I love you*.
Not once did I sign back
I know when
her love can be heard.