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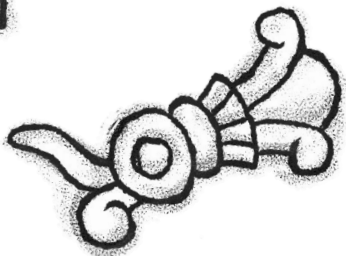
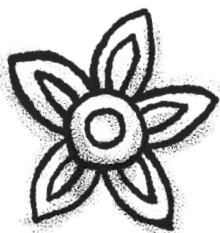
“A Flower Song for Maidens Coming of Age”
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The Moon Within

AIDA SALAZAR



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MY LOCKET

There is a locket in my heart
that holds all of the questions
that do cartwheels in my mind
and gurgle up to the top of my brain
like root beer fizz.

Questions that my journal
doesn't keep so my little brother, Juju,
or other snoops don't read them.
Questions that Mima
knows how to answer
but I'm too embarrassed to ask her
because they might
seem stupid or gross or wrong.

Like, why have my armpits begun to smell?
Or how big will my breasts grow?
Or when exactly will my period come?

I flush bright red

right through my amber skin
just thinking about it.

It was so long ago that Mima was
eleven, maybe she wouldn't
remember what it is like
maybe she'll make me talk about it, a lot
maybe wind herself into a lecture
about the beauty of women's bodies
that I don't want to hear from her
sometimes cactus lips.
Maybe she'll just think I'm
delirious and say,
Celi, are you running a fever?
while she kisses my forehead.

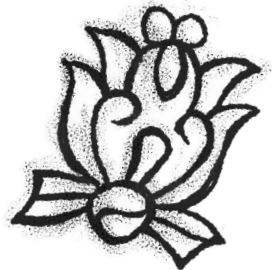
My locket also keeps secrets.

Secrets tangle in the shyness of my tongue
even when I try to tell them
to my best friend
Magda.

Instead, my locket holds quiet my crush
on Iván who is one year older
than me and who can do a backflip
better than the other boys in his capoeira class.

Or the wish that Aurora, my “friend”
would just go away and
not have a crush on him too.
Or how often I sneak the tablet
from my parents when
I’m supposed to be practicing
music or dancing.

Though I’ve never seen it
I know my locket is there.
It keeps my questions
 my secrets
warm
unanswered
and safe.



LUNA

A beam of moonlight
squeezes through
my window's curtain.

Luna is out tonight.

My eyes wide open like doors.

I'll be twelve in a few months, I should
be allowed to go to sleep later
than seven-year-old Juju, who shares a room with me
but I'm not.

No matter that it is Saturday.
Round-cheeked Juju passes
out the moment his head hits the pillow.

And I stare at the May moonlight.

I watch her light up a sliver of dust
in my room.

And when Luna is gone
and I can't see their floating
I know they continue to dance
in a dream
with Luna and me.

