

Do You Speak Virgin?

Analicia Sotelo

This wedding is some hell:

a bouquet of cacti wilting in my hand
while my closest friends, sitting on a bar bench,

stir the sickles in their drinks,
smile up at me.

The moon points out my neckline
like a chaperone.

My veil is fried tongue and chicken wire,
hanging off to one side.

I am a Mexican American fascinator.

Let me cluck my way to an empty field
where my husband

stays silent most of the time
and the stars are like the arachnid eyes

of my mother-in-law: duplicitous,
ever-present in the dark.

I'm not afraid of sex.

I'm afraid of his skeleton
knocking against the headboard

in the middle of the night.

I'm afraid I am a blind goat with a ribbon
in my hair, with screws for eyes.

I'm afraid wherever I walk, it's purgatory.
I meet a great lake with rust-colored steam

rising, someone somewhere
has committed murder, is hiding

in the bushes with an antique mirror.

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The virgins are here to prove a point.
The virgins are here to tell you to fuck off.

The virgins are certain there's a circle of hell
dedicated to that fear you'll never find anyone else.

You know what it looks like:

all the lovers cloaked in blood
and salt and never satisfied,

a priest collar like a giant tooth
in the midnight sky.

I want to know what's coming in the afterlife
before I sign off on arguments

in the kitchen, and the sight of him
fleeing to the car

once he sees how far and wide,
how dark and deep

this frigid female mind can go.