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The Mexican Tule Tree, or El Árbol del Tule, has the widest trunk in the world. In it children spot animal forms, which has led to the tree's nickname: "Tree of Life." Unfortunately, the Tule Tree is dying.

I.

"This is the day the Lord has made," the wall tells Abuela as she slowly turns her head.

Outside, clouds move in slow, undulating steps, like elephants with their great gray bellies swinging between pillar legs. The sky's only adornment is the green leaves of the Tule tree, which cannot possibly be planted there, yet blocks the light nonetheless. Perhaps the branches are not Tule, but oak or elm—but how to explain the thick trunk almost as wide as it is tall other than to name it a Montezuma Cypress, a Tule tree?

Abuela suspects that tree to be the very same she touched as a little girl on a visit to a cousin outside of Oaxaca. The Tule simply unstuck its roots, like boots from mud, and marched to her window. And why shouldn't the Tule follow her? In another life, one long gone and recorded over like a tape, she planted that tree.

II.

Memory exists only in story, but Abuela's lips no longer form the words to her tales and so her thoughts disappear like specters in the light. The wall no longer preaches to her; instead, a cartoon coyote chases a blue-feathered bird. Someone in the chair next to her giggles, a child's voice, and Abuela fears the coyote will catch the baby in its teeth. Last week a coyote crept into her aunt's chicken coop and killed all of her chickens, *diez pollos*, except one that ran around the yard with blood spurting like oil from the punctures in its neck until, out of compassion, her aunt chopped its head off.

Recuerda este día her aunt commanded. And Abuela would remember it, not only for the river of blood that ran from the chopping block, but for what her aunt told her as she held up the body by the feet. *We are all this chicken.*

No, not last week. Last week the little girl visited, in her Easter bonnet and lace collar; she gave Abuela an egg dyed powder blue. Perhaps the egg was from her aunt's farm, kept safe from the greedy coyote by the discarded feathers of its distraught mother?

Someone feeds Abuela a spoonful of metallic eggs, which she chews between her tongue and the roof of her mouth like a baby bird. Then another.

The roadrunner walks across the space between two cliffs.

III.

The Tule tree has lost all of its leaves.

The Tule tree is dead.

In its branches are the remains of two birds' nests, like two glass balls on a Christmas tree missing all of its needles. Overnight, one of the nests falls; in the morning, a tiny head emerges from the second. The bird will die—Abuela knows this before she sees the desperate flap of wings, the quick plummet. In winter, nothing born can survive. Yet the death matters not; in the branches of the Tree of Life, things do not begin and end with the body.

“I have lent him to the Lord.”

In the afternoon, the second nest has fallen.

IV.

Abuela and the giggling girl have exchanged bodies. Now Abuela wears the purple dress, itchy around the neck, and the white socks folded carefully at the ankle by her mother. Now she wears the shiny black shoes. In the bed next to her is an old woman who is barely breathing, who sucks at a tube like the straw of a milkshake but the air is the treat. Abuela is scared of this woman, scared of her machine, scared of the way she smells. She wants to play outside in the snow, only the snow is melting and by the time she returns home, all that will be left is a cold puddle at the end of her driveway.

When the machine stops wheezing, Abuela is grateful. Now she can hear the chirping of birds in the Tule tree, birds that did not fall from their nests but instead migrated for the winter and have come back in spring. Now she can go outside and feel the warm summer sun on her cheeks, and the top of her white bonnet.

The Tule tree is lush with leaves, and its roots are stretching like cramped fingers. Animals chase each other around the perimeter of its trunk.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

V.

Outside of Oaxaca, a coyote stalks its prey under the protection of Benito Juárez National Park, avoiding tourists and their eager lenses. Far away, the Tule tree stands proudly against the clear blue sky. Traveling the long road nearby, cars whip by—oblivious to its greatness, killing it slowly.