

WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF DEATH LIKE FOR YOU?

(after Yolanda Wisner's workshop prompt)

María Fernanda

Norma Elia Cantú Creative Writing Award

I festooned violets in my dark curls, their cousin.

Tied my necklace string—a small black canvas rolled
thin—to another violet with all its petals.

The petals open away from my dress, like a diver, preparing. I remember,
their soft edges scorching.

Each began turning in like fingers returning to its palm.
I used to call this

death. Until I died, myself.

100-WORD LOVE STORY (I)

María Fernanda

Norma Elia Cantú Creative Writing Award

Four-months old in Phoenix, my Harlem-folded cardboard boxes crowd my living room floor. Spine-crooked books, faded flyers, and dozens of drafted poems make each box hunch over another. The clear tape was uncut, but loosened. *Why don't you settle in?* Gloria, the person I'm casually seeing from a distance, asks, stepping inside. Gloria and I know this year: I don't plan to move again at my lease's end. But that advances making certain choices, like keeping this bed, that bookshelf or these chairs—things I have always borrowed—and soon, left. This is the afternoon Gloria wants a sign that she is permanent.

100-WORD LOVE STORY (2)

María Fernanda

Norma Elia Cantú Creative Writing Award

I drive toward the sun. The nude beaches are behind us; The hiking, ahead. Well-defined city colors from Los Angeles slip behind our car. Passing the Arizona border, the land thickens into mountains—ones that lean into dust-crafted funeral veils. The temperature rises 'till the evening, when I smooth cantu through Kenna's close-shaven head, between my legs. Different from earlier when we pulled over to see the city of vintage typewriters or to explore Papago Park, Kenna turns to me from in-between my legs, with a soft smile, out of words.

