Virgil Suárez

The Maker of Mango Marmalade

She reads the swirls left by the spatula as she turns the thickening, sweet-scented concoction. Or bubbles rising up and popping on the surface. The storm of '26 that drowned the great American poet, though his jumping off the boat was called a suicide. Or the night sugar cane fields caught fire, blazed the night into surrender, ashes trickling down from the heavens like the lace mantillas women wear to church on Sundays.

Or the story of the hag-witch who haunts all bridges in and out of town. After midnight any man riding would see this old woman turn into a voluptuous maiden in stress by the banks of the river. Many men have drowned chasing after her, others claim they died chasing their dreams, their own moon-lit shadows, translucent on the water's surface. As she stirs, her hands cramp like claws the syrupy marmalade forms ribbons, gauzy, silken on the surface of the pot she reads on. She tastes for tartness, has learned to drown in such sweetness.