

*Virgil Suárez*



## The Maker of Mango Marmalade

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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 distress 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.

