

Sandra Del Valle

Waiting For Grace

We were never really Christian.
No Sunday school.
No choir practice.
No wafers under the tongue.
Of priests and nuns
Abuelita would say:
 "No sea estúpida . . .
 you don't know what else
 those robes can hide".

But a *santera* came once
swirling in white, wide hips
casting smoke and chants and beads,
filling our little rooms.
She came to release
the bad spirits she said.
"Un sahumero".
I watched, behind a curtain.
Looked at Santa Barbara, San Tomas
and the bleeding *Jesu Cristo*
on *Abuelita's* altar.
What did they think of this?
I had taught myself the Ten Commandments
and thought, "we're breaking a few today".
But the next day,
when Papa said something to Rafi
and Rafi answered back,
before a hand was raised,
Mama cried "the beads, the beads!
That witch she left them here!
They've made you fight,

can't you see?"

We felt our rescue certain
sending the beads down the sink
swirling away.

Such promise!

Who could say that tomorrow
would not be a new day?

We were all here together,
round a round basin,
just waiting to be saved.