Natasha Marin

MALADE IMAGINAIRE

Back home his mamá is still sweat-stuck to a folding chair. Her wide bottom welted by bands of plastic and unrelenting time. She examines the point in her palm where her life-line fades and her son returns with feet heavy as the yellow icebox carcass—molting curls of sun-bleached paint.

He supposes that she is not thinking of him—her big baby boy cut from her own skin after 14 hours of rib-scraping mutiny. She is only there—hoping for an Indian daughter-in-law to make douglas with, so she can watch the arch of their feet stiffen like wet candle wax.

It is now 10:44 p.m. and Monsieur Duránge is reading post-colonial theory. He is not mesmerized by the machete-streak of orange makeup along her chin. No part of him crumples like her shoulders in that hot crevice of a kitchen.

She is not fingering the damp scarf of her hair when he leaves ink prints on clean pages.