

## **The Ghost of Mother**

*by Sheree La Puma*

If there's an oasis for weary travelers along  
the silk road, I've yet to find it. I wander  
like an outlaw trying to bag the sun.  
Memories scattered, bits & pieces, here  
& there like breadcrumbs. I handfeed a dream  
that's clearly dying. Everything I touch turns to dust.

Upon a Time, I made soup out of stones. Mixed sugar  
with raindrops in an old honey jar. Too young for Kool-Aid,  
or half-baked suicide, Grandma's. After her death, my rape  
abortion, miscarriage, two live births, then you, heavy,  
with vernix. A complex shield, made up of lipid-rich butter  
that lingered in the folds of your skin as if to say, "I am not you."

23 years later, I reminisce on the caustic nature of mother.  
Try to recall the warmth of you. I can't. Was it the drugs?  
They flowed through me, branching out, unraveling in triple time.  
Triggering something deep & mournful. "Sorry, Katie I missed  
your call. Dead phone." I wasn't ready for another suicide, yours,  
mine, or separation, now 4 years long. Grief, leading nowhere.

Split open, more alone than I've ever been. I am losing myself,  
searching for you, this house, crowds, that coffeeshop on Sunset  
where I got you to crack a half-smile for a photograph that sits on  
my desk. It's all I have left. Motherhood haunts me like a ghost. I google  
your name after every disaster. Who am I if not mother? I began  
in a backseat, couch, alley way, in a room with a knife to my throat,

weeping until the cops came. "Do you have somewhere else to go?"  
Out the window with Bob, my punk rock boyfriend, living/dying  
in a garage, stealing morphine from his mother. Her cancer dark  
& thick, low dust cellular insulation, blown in. She died. We lived.  
Now Bob peddles sobriety on TV in a form of redemption. He has  
3, kids & 500000 Instagram followers & I have a beautiful blank wall.