you carry the love from others in your hair

most stories about my tía nieves are about her birth: how she was pushed out covered in snow, winter my grandma didn’t want near. that’s why my grandma didn’t press my tía close to her ribcage—let their geographies crust over each other—that’s why my tía was raised by another woman, by another family, hundreds & hundreds of soundtracks away, on uncombed land, where my tía would stomp, stumble, storm, where she’d fall down dripping trees, lay as a dropped peach, twirl hair strands into whirlpools, wonder if you’re supposed to find your mother in your hair. what i think my tía believes: you carry the love from others in your hair. the first time i met her, her fingers grazed through my scalp, & she told me in spanish, your head’s not hungry at all. look at all you got inside. an idea i loved to wonder about, but could never prove, not even when my hair would forest over my ears, root. but i would like for my tíia’s theory to be true, so that you weren’t alone when you killed yourself, so that when you put a bag over your head & your breathing fragiled, you could have heard us as the world slipped away: our love swimming through your curls, at first soft, quiet, & then rowing into a loud, thundering, lullabying hum.