

Radames Ortiz

RELAPSE

At the edge of a bed near the infection of light,
Lazaro opens his velcro wallet and plucks
the dirty carcass of a hummingbird inside.

The muted feathers, the stiffened cartilage
nestled between a bank receipt and George
Washington's crisp grimace.

If every story has a beginning this one
starts in a shadow-scarred room when the ghost
of a grandmother enters

like smoke, like bloody gauze.
Her eyes are stone, her hair
the stench of packed dirt.

In the air, her presence is a terrible thought.
Tremors rattle the body, walls
turn into a dopey mythic ruin.

Lazaro places the crusted bird
on the nightstand near a syringe.
A bird once the symbol of an Aztec

God, once a gift meant to be nursed
in his left pocket. *Love and Prosperity*.
A reminder that she is in between them.