

And This Is How We Learned How to Sing

mother's tongue:

half American dollar

half home to

Mexico City

love

you

mouth drowning in shredded dahlia with no hands to
make it my language

give

what you

remember

to the man with the tiny

steel fruit cart—

music from the river

your

grandmother

lost you in

or the

fields

that made your

young hands

red giants gasping

¡cállate! Niña

you will

never

look like

them

American dollar you haven't loved us any for speaking
English

harvest

the gold

from

our shoulders

forget the debris of the dead stars it came from

sing

don't cry

sing

to the red giants

police kicked into

my brother's head

for my mother to

kneel over
and kiss
sing
to
that stranger's
Spanish wet dream
only as fantasies are we valuable enough to live
sing
to that
sweet rose in my hair
the clothes that smell
like my mother's kitchen
scorched ancho
and
gutted
guajillo
grandfather's hands buried in labor
the water in the backs
of his knees salt and dirt where his future daughters
rise
love
you
mother
tongue
a bleeding heart melting in our hands the giant red stains
you leave
the Spanish music
that weeps
I am singing!
look, God
I am singing!
my mother
my brother
are singing