Autobiography of My Hungers
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dead now for decades, my mother. Yet I had been careful
to preserve certain ceremonies in her honor: candles on her
birth date (March 21), candles on her death date (September
12), candles on Mexican Mother’s Day (May 10), and flowers
for her grave when I visited Michoacán, where she’s buried.
Each time I came back, my brother asked me, though he
knew the answer, “Did you take flowers to our mom?”

Since he had not returned to Michoacán, my brother
didn’t know how much the town had changed, and, despite
the air of permanence, so had the cemetery. Every day people
died, and so complete strangers transformed the familiar
landscape of the graveyard. It was not so easy anymore to
say, *To get to my mother’s grave, walk up the left path, and two rows
after the well, turn left. It’s the tomb with the blue tiles.*

The last time I tried to follow my own directions, I
became disoriented: the left path was disrupted by another
grave, there was now a second well, another tomb was also
covered with blue tile. When I told my brother this, he grew
furious.

“How could you forget where she’s buried?” he demanded.
“How could you let her get lost like that?”

My mouth dropped, but I didn’t respond. I didn’t want
to get in the way of my brother admonishing himself.