Autobiography of My Hungers

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Another June of fatherlessness, childlessness, while the word, *father*, floated through the air like pollen, the fecundity of it birthing memories of Apá, Papi, forgivable and forgiven on his one special day. But on the other 364 he remained that shadow of a man, afterimage, ring of condensation on the counter that slowly vanished. Even through my thirties and into my forties I still felt like the boy he abandoned at thirteen. I attended baptisms and baby showers, skeptical of my friends who said they’d love their newborns forever. I knew better: Every child became difficult to love or love back.

“You were born so small, and hairy, and ugly,” my father once told me, “that I felt sorry for you. And now you look too handsome to be from this family.”

We were driving to the Mexican border, he to return to his second wife, who was pregnant again, me on a visit from college to see my brother, who was still childless after two years of marriage.

He no longer asked me about being single, or about having children. I was no longer part of the world he and my brother inhabited. I was a citizen of the unattached, the people who left no footprints after they died.

“I’m scared for your brother,” my father confessed. “I don’t understand what’s taking so long. I want him to know
the happiness of being a father. There’s nothing more beautiful in this life than having a son.”

And I thought, not just yet, beloved brother. Don’t rush into the misery of becoming the disappointing parent of the disappointing child.