

# El Olvido

By Judith Ortiz Cofer

It is a dangerous thing  
to forget the climate of your birthplace,  
to choke out the voices of dead relatives  
when in dreams they call you  
by your secret name.  
It is dangerous  
to spurn the clothes you were born to wear  
for the sake of fashion; dangerous  
to use weapons and sharp instruments  
you are not familiar with; dangerous  
to disdain the plaster saints  
before which your mother kneels  
praying with embarrassing fervor  
that you survive in the place you have chosen to live:  
a bare, cold room with no pictures on the walls,  
a forgetting place where she fears you will die  
of loneliness and exposure.  
*Jesús, María, y José, she says,  
el olvido is a dangerous thing.*

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