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# WAOUNAN WOMAN'S PRAYER

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Embera and Waounan women,  
The brown girls, whose bodies and faces  
are carefully lined with black henna, generously  
painted, whose hair shines, women who  
wear river washed *palomas*,  
those brightly beautiful dyes, easy on the  
eyes, women whose chests are bare  
in the heat, no shame  
living in homes made of bark with straw  
devouring dinners of corn and plantains,  
malnourished bodies resting after a sweltering  
span of work,

Strong and sick women  
concerned for their babies, who will  
work and walk hours and hours to find  
a makeshift clinic, where gratefully and gracefully  
they receive ointments and antibiotics and creams  
from *gringos* in blue, saying *dónde duele?* while  
there's more than physical sickness here, watching those  
angel-aliens so easily make their girls smile—even  
after decayed teeth are ripped  
from their mouths with silver tools  
and little local anesthetic—with just a touch,

a word of care, *chocas en las manos*,  
*pegatinas*, latex glove balloons: souvenirs  
the tooth fairy can't bring,

Ever indebted women,  
whose with high hopes for future  
lies in mothers sending their  
girls from Darién to the city, where  
their tattoos are wiped clean,  
dressed with chests concealed, where  
they'll marry a Hispanic city man, a mother  
who hopes her girls will always remember  
home, the dances she taught  
them, how to make their hair  
shine, make their skin glow,  
her hope they won't work  
as hard, or have to walk  
and wait only  
to fall through  
cracks instead of care: that will make  
their mother proud of sending  
her daughters away.