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## Aunt Mirta; Infancia

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## **Florencia Milito**

ARGENTINA

### ***Aunt Mirta***

*Caracas, 1979*

Now she steals flowers  
from the neighbors' gardens,  
waits until siesta time  
when they are asleep,  
hides them under her blouse,  
the thorns from the roses  
prickle her skin,  
brush against her scars:  
exiled ex-revolutionary turned  
small time thief  
living out her days under  
the non-judgmental Caribbean sun,  
what the caption would read  
if there were one.

## **Infancia**

Of tropical plenitude, overgrown monte, wild banana plants and ferns, of the cobalt-blue veranda overlooking the monte, off-limits to kids, of legs dangling over the veranda, under pleated navy skirts or blue jeans on uniform days, of knees skinned from playing *La Ere* on the asphalt, of the colorful margins we drew on our lined notebooks at the beginning of the school year, of our drawings, palm trees and the bright, tropical sun, the squiggly blue lines of the Caribbean, of a greying Sarita, beloved principal, trailblazing pioneer, her beautiful, sculpted face and vaguely patrician airs, who, in a flash of fury, once threw a shoe at clowning Valodia during math class, of Sarita again, the use of the diminutive in her nickname, which only enhanced her presence, who taught me something about the ways of the world by favoring my best friend Lisa for valedictorian, of the classroom teacher who stood up to Sarita that day because I, shy daughter of immigrants, had higher marks, of the fated fieldtrip to a local swimming pool, beyond the cemetery, only to find it overrun with tiny frogs after a tropical storm, of the deep purple of the *raspados*, grape ices we bought from the math teacher at recess, of the forbidden pencil drawings Leonora, the Chilean, also a daughter of *exilados* and a precocious student of human anatomy, sold to the boys for centimos, of the Venezuelan word *jamonearse*, making out, whispered by the boys at recess, from *jamón* which means ham, of Valodia, the bad-boy with emerald eyes and my first crush, whose grandfather was a poet, whispering he was Superman and I Lois Lane.