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## San Francisco

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**San Francisco**  
by Adela Najarro

My great-grandmother taught my mother to read using chalk  
and a black slate in León where adobe brick  
buildings are white-washed Spaniards

and history. We brought with us red and blue macaws, panthers,  
and crocodiles. Tooling up and down  
Dolores Street hills, my Papi rode

a bicycle delivering Lela's *nacatamales*. Back and forth  
from a clock tower at the end of Market Street,  
a renovated 1919 streetcar,

transplanted from Milan, works tourist dollars. Advertisements  
from the late sixties posted behind  
True View Plexi-glass. I can't read a word

of the European Italian glitz, deep blue of the Mediterranean  
and a Coca-Cola, but there is a warm blanket  
on a wooden bench and a leather

hand hook. Above a Cuban restaurant, where waiters serve  
black bean hummus and chocolate croissants,  
hangs the gay pride flag alongside

a Direct TV satellite dish. Gabby walks to school, Pokémon  
cards in his pocket. Sanchez Street. I work  
in the kitchen with my Lela. Mariposa Avenue,

Valencia Street, Camino Real, are added to *masa*. Homemade  
tortillas puff into sweetness. I'm not  
one third Irish, one half German

and two parts English with a little Cherokee thrown in,  
but last night I couldn't translate the word "hinge"  
on every door that opens and closes

to clouds beyond four walls. An old lady, perhaps Cambodian,  
Vietnamese, Korean, something of her own,  
hurries off the 31 Stockton while

my Tía Teresa double parks in front of the *mercados* on 24th street  
*para los quesos* and the chiles in the backroom. One  
whiff and the world is not so small.

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