

October 2022

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Adela Najarro

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Recommended Citation

Najarro, Adela (2022) "My Mother's High Heel Shoes," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 1: Iss. 2, Article 22.

Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol1/iss2/22>

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My Mother's High Heel Shoes

by Adela Najarro

A fat man in white. A polished stone floor. Marble or granite
cool in the hot sun. Circular tables. Chairs. Umbrellas.

A patio deck.

Inside the cabana, at the counter, I ordered a hamburger.

In Nicaragua?

Maybe it was a soda

in a highball glass with a cherry. I do not have to ask
for money. I am part of the black sand, fine silt, and seaside sparrow.

The sun drapes freckles across my mother's shoulders.
Ponoloya, a beach in Nicaragua. She is seventeen and pretty.

I lost the 8x10 glossy.

Each eyelash curved. An ivory cheek. Joan Crawford lips.

I think I took it

to school for a class

project on family history and autobiography. In the second drawer
of her dresser, a satin slip the size of a Mead college-ruled notebook.

How close can I get to the first bikini on Ponoloya?
Saturday at three o'clock old movies re-run on KTTV, Channel 11.

Clark Cable. Claudette Colbert.

A shapely leg in a silk stocking extends for a ride

to champagne

and elegant parties.

Cummerbunds. Gold taffeta. Who does my mother kiss on a blanket
as *abuelita* scolds her with a look that keeps hands in view?

My mother spots a picture in a Paris magazine or one
de Los Estados Unidos and asks the seamstress to make her just like it.

Probably blue.

It would have covered her belly button but exposed two inches of ribs

below the bosom.

Esther Williams

pulls back her hair and raises one arm before submersion.

On an overcast day we head toward Huntington Beach.

The piping tube of a seaweed frond stuck in a castle turret.

Half moon slivers. Crushed shells.

Pebbles in sand.

My father, my brother and I are added to a shoebox.