

## *Predictions of the Material*

Before the wick rejects  
the flame; before the glass salts  
the waters, or the rental en route  
to your funeral stalls, I worry

the dog isn't getting enough sun,  
& it is midnight but we step out  
anyway onto summer's chow

tongue. Clouds extend the glare  
of lightning far off. Before phlox  
heads drop, the dog sinks  
the anthill gathered full & quick  
at the ceiba's trunk. Nothing swarms

his leg or the river he pisses  
into the heart like a god, no arthropod  
island, no insect bridge of grappled  
spurs. Before sunrise, I turn

a burner high in anticipation, olive oil  
dollop ready to smother the pan,  
when a moth plummets to the blushing  
element. Wings immediately

charred. Let me tell you,  
more than once in a parked car  
I've held the searing buckle  
to my chest—before drivethrus,  
before driveways, drivel down

philtrum; before the beach, crushing  
indistinguishable mounds  
in bare feet, a horse conch's crown

tearing skin. Even anaphora  
can't coax the future. You said, *Ay mija,*  
*are you crying again?* before dusk  
revealed the hook in the pelican's beak.

### **Credit**

---

Copyright © 2020 by Jessica Guzman. Originally published in Poem-a-Day on January 29, 2020, by the Academy of American Poets.

### **About this Poem**

---

"I was writing poems about losing my father and kept returning to a moment in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* where the characters interpret the state of objects around them as 'predictions of the material.' After my father's death, it felt like every tangible object—animate and inanimate—offered predictions I disregarded. This poem emerged from a meditation on that feeling, as well as an interest in how anaphora both reveals and conceals what we remember."

—Jessica Guzman

## Author

---

### Jessica Guzman



Jessica Guzman is the author of *Adelante* (Switchback Books, 2020), winner of the 2019 Gatewood Prize. She lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. .

Date Published: 2020-02-29

Source URL: <https://poets.org/poem/predictions-material>