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CAZAR MEANS TO HUNT NOT TO MARRY

I thought it was a love story, a wedding
taking place in *The Book of Fables*,
the first in Spanish given to me
because I was always reading
(*por eso ojos de vaca*, one aunt
would say), never alone but
as alone as I could get.

I tried to follow the *cazador*
hunting after the fox, but was stopped
by the fox falling on her side, turning
back into a woman; the wailing
man, the *cazador*, also stopped
to hold her in his arms. The ceremony
made no sense. I tucked the book away

with my toys under the sink, and let
the story sit there in the dark,
rooted with the things I'd learn
to leave behind. Like a root,
the story spread in offshoots down
into my life. *Casar*, my mother
would say after hours talking

in a parked car with a man whose face
I'd never see because the porch light
was kept off. *Casar*, she'd say to me
as I grew up and moved from place
to place, asking if I loved my books,
if I thought they'd care for me
as I grew old. *Cazar*, I later read

in another book, another fable,
and saw for the first time
that the word I heard so often
from my mother was cousin
to this other word, that each sounded
the same — *to hunt, to marry* —
How many pages had I turned

and in my own confusion read
violence as love, had read one word
and let the meaning shoot right past me,
an arrow cast for its own sake, without caring
where it hit? How long will the chase
after a woman feel like a chase
away from myself? Will this forever

be the story? Where is the book
I can pull out to go back
to where I started: a man
fumbling his way to a clearing;
a fox stopping, holding still,
silently scanning the sky
for something that has yet to fall.