

*The Reason We Are Here*  
Claudia Vilela Casaretto

I woke up after a surgery  
And my mother was crying  
I clutched the stuffed dalmatian the nurse handed to me  
The same one I held on the plane ride from Lima

*Todo estará bien*

She would tell me

*Todo estará bien?* like she had asked my doctor

A man spoke through the phone

He'd capture my mother's words

But never her tone

I remember the doctor's expression well

Because it hardly changed

Nothing compared to the animation in my mother's face

I am her *orgullo*

She would always say

Her biggest source of pride

*Eres la razon por qué estamos aqui*

I've tried to live up to her words

And give meaning to everything she had to give up

I'd be like our family doctor

The first stranger my mother learned to trust

*El salvo tu vida*

She was convinced he was the one who saved my life

But years later her head started to hurt,

as I learned about the human brain

Her vision was blurry

An ambulance was too expensive

And she won't be able to drive

As a student studying medicine,

I thought about my differential

The one for an immigrant mother who lost her health insurance

Blood pressure was in the 200s

The voice of my professor when he talks about prevention

Drowned out my mother's as she explained what she thinks the doctor said

*No lo entiendo*

I also couldn't understand

Why can't I do more for my mother?

And for the mother who I met at the free clinic

The one who asked me if I was going to tell anyone

That her family was undocumented

I remember the sentence I wrote in my personal statement,

"I'd be like our family doctor"

Sounds hollow now