Lost on September Trail, 1967

Alberto Ríos
There was a roof over our heads and that was at least something. Then came dances. The energy for them came from childhood, or before, from the time when only warmth was important. We had come to the New World and become part of it. If the roof would shelter us, we would keep it in repair. Roof then could be roof, solid, visible, recognizable, and we could be whatever it was that we were at this moment. Having lost our previous names somewhere in the rocks as we ran, we could not yet describe ourselves. For two days the rain had been steady, and we left the trail because one of us remembered this place. Once when I was young I had yielded to the temptation of getting drunk, and parts of it felt like this, wet and hot, timeless, in the care of someone else. After the dances we sat like cubs, and cried for that which in another world might be milk, but none came. We had only ourselves, side by side and we began a wrestling that comes, like dances, out of nowhere and leaves into the night like sophisticated daughters painted and in plumes, but young,
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a night darker than its name.
We gave ourselves over to adoration
of the moon, but we did not call it
moon, the words that came out
were instead noises as we tried
to coax it close enough
to where we might jump,
overpower it, and bring it to our
mouths, which is, after all,
the final test of all things.
But we could not, it only circled us,
calmly, and we wanted it more.
We called it Carlos, but it did not
come, we called it friend, comrade,
but nothing. We used every word
until we fell, exhausted, and slept
with our eyes open, not trusting
each other, dark pushing us even
farther into childhood, into liquid,
making us crave eyelessness,
craving so hard we understand
prayer without knowing its name.
At some point we failed
ourselves, and eyelids fell.
We dreamt dreams of even farther
worlds, so different they cannot
be remembered, cannot be remembered
because they cannot be described
or even imagined. We woke
and did not remember, and the night
before became part of those farther
worlds, and we did not remember
speaking to the moon.
We got up from the centuries
and centuries, and called
each other by name.
Honey, the one that was me said,
drying her tears that were
really the rain from the night
before, which had taken her
without me knowing, *honey*,
again, but she did not understand.
She wanted only the sun
because she was cold, she pulled out
hair to offer it, from her head
and her arms. She understood me
only when I held her, made her
warm. She reached to her head
and offered now me more
of herself. I took it.
I put it to my mouth,
put it to a cupped tongue
and took it in. She moved
and I put my hands on her knees
which looked up at opposite ends
of the sky.