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## Rosecrucian Triptych

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ROSICRUCIAN TRIPTYCH

**Envelope first, 1953**

A ring of adults holding hands, burning candles, chanting, a series of levitations visible through the window—Tia Veronica claims she and Mama witnessed a séance from their cousin's backyard.

Inside the living room, their frumpy aunts, half-drunk uncles, parents (my future grandparents), and strangers summoned spirits with one synchronized hum.

First an envelope floated off the table, then the gingham tablecloth spun off in a gust. Finally the table bobbed as if riding a cosmic wave.

Fried chicken and white biscuits Tia Veronica and Mama agree is what they ate for dinner that night, thighs and a twilight game of tag or hide and seek, depending on whom you believe. The levitations Mama refutes. When asked to explain them, she shrugs. Her tightened shoulders suggest a mental ruse, a hologram of boredom.

**Esoteric Knowledge, 1955**

Flying was out of the question given their income so they drove from San Antonio to Anaheim. Apart from a beach trip to Corpus Christi, Disneyland was Mama's first official vacation. Tia Veronica, afflicted by motion sickness, stayed home playing card games with a relative, asking only for a mouse keychain.

It was not the thrill of rollercoasters that led my grandparents, my great -aunts and uncles west, but an international Rosicrucian convention held nearby. Masters and disciplines, the practiced and the novice all congregated in one coliseum. Statues and paper pamphlets trading hands.

The adults rotated attendance at the conference, a mea-

sured relay to keep Mama's attention fixed on the theme park's talking animals, costumed rodents with plastered smiles.

### **Of Pesadillas, 1987**

Sundays at mass the same gitano sat at the end of our pew. Unruly gray hair, striped linen shirt, black trousers, a hat on his lap. Without fail, he sought out my great-aunt Fatima's hand for the sign of peace.

Who is he, I asked her one afternoon at home while we took turns filing each other's nails. It was clear he knew her from another vector of youth.

Don't talk about him, she hushed, clicking her tongue.

Already Fatima had observed me turning off radios with my mind, overhead lights. Occurrences I had not exerted energy to control or hide.

Nights later I intercepted Fatima in her dreams. We lingered in front of my grandparents' house, the sky musky with secrets. A business envelope rested securely in her hands. My adolescent naivety failed to recognize the ritual of initiation.

She warned me, before turning away, "He's coming to meet me. It's best you leave, Tatum."

The back of her head, a maze of black zigzags, pointed to future generations.