

On a hill, a bland brick building in the upper Bronx, my old apartment  
*Imani Congdon*

I went back home on my own, when I was old enough,  
found the brick building where my family lived  
and listened, night after night,  
to the *Chicano* family of nine upstairs, as the littlest of the two sisters,  
Selena, turned *comunista*,  
because one day  
she read three pages of Marx in the library  
and saw Frida Kahlo's *Vogue* cover  
and decided the decadence of food stamps,  
of her parent's backbreaking five jobs  
to support  
six kids,  
an ailing *abuela*,  
and the three-bedroom apartment  
they all shared  
were too bourgeoisie for her.

So she left home  
to sneak into NYU lectures on communism  
and slept with the visiting communist scholars  
in their suites at the Ritz,  
and saw absolutely no irony in that.

The rest of the family grew away eventually,  
dependent to the ever-fluxing rent rates, they left,  
and the *Rajasthani* family moved in with their one son, Samrat,  
whose mother cooked with her mother-in-law and her sister  
every other day—

We knew because  
we would always hear  
about the missing cardamom  
when she screamed at the cabinets  
to “give up her fucking spices”—  
her mother-in-law stole it every time  
and chewed the citrusy seeds in the hallway—  
and because she sent Samrat down every time with the surplus;

a full pot of *dal* and a little plastic tub of *gulab jamun*—  
with extra almond slices in the rose syrup,  
because I always begged for extra almond slices—  
and he would smile at me as I pressed his payment,