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# The Mortician's *Guayabera*

by Virgil Suárez

It hangs behind the door, white like his hands,  
after so much washing of bodies, flesh of pure

rapture. In the eyes of a dead child, a river  
speaks of valleys, mountains, a scarf adrift

in the currents. In a dead man's mouth, a gift  
of red words, a column of fire rising from cane

fields in the night. This man could be a father,  
a son, or the Trinity. A scar runs down his spine

toward the back of his left leg, a sienna canyon  
caught between two cupped hands of earth.

It is a bird, this shirt of white, tropical humidity,  
mist rising above palm fronds in *el campo*, a *guajiro's*

garb, his suave style, ready for *decimas*, dance  
in the company of *campesina* ladies, white bird,

egret, stork, a dove, rising there behind the door.  
You would not know of its longing, its passing.

In the night, when this man too used to silence,  
wears it out in the cool evening breeze, it glows,

it comes alive. It is beacon of all those dying  
for their return home. And if you return home,

you will wear the plumage of birds on your back,  
the color of brackish water in your eyes, salt or sugar

in your mouth, the sting of tears from such radiance.

