

Writer Dorianne Laux's fifth collection of poetry, *The Book of Men*, will be published by W.W. Norton in February, 2011. She lives and teaches in Raleigh, North Carolina. "Aphasia" first appeared in *What We Carry* (1994). Artist Jennifer Moses lives in Boston and teaches art at the University of New Hampshire. Her most recent solo show was at the Kingston Gallery in Boston.

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Aphasia

for Honeya

After the stroke all she could say was *Venezuela*, pointing to the pitcher with its bright blue rim, her one word command. And when she drank the clear water in and gave the glass back, it was *Venezuela* again, gratitude, maybe, or the word now simply a sigh, like the sky in the window, the pillows a cloudy definition propped beneath her head. Pink roses dying on the bedside table, each fallen petal a scrap in the shape of a country she'd never been to, had never once expressed interest in, and now it was everywhere, in the peach she lifted, dripping, to her lips, the white tissue in the box, her brooding children when they came to visit, baptized with their new name after each kiss. And at night she whispered it, dark narcotic in her husband's ear as he bent to listen, her hands fumbling at her buttons, her breasts, holding them up to the light like a gift. *Venezuela*, she said.