



URBANA

Volume X

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Editor's Note

Dear beautiful,

For you, we created something to get your minds to wind and unwind, burn and breathe, to be romanced or broken. The volume started in the middle of events difficult to ignore and that needed voice. A voice that needed to tell a story of our reality, or for some, fantasy. Amid chaos and disagreements, we found our ground.

Overwhelming as it may be, you shouldn't lose focus of what constitutes the person you are. Fighting for others becomes easier when you discover that first. Self-identification can be terrifying. It isn't about labels or categories. Ask yourself: Who are you? What makes you feel beautiful? We are talking about you. The one who looks back in the mirror every morning when no one is around. Who is that?

Figuring ourselves out in a filtered world is as strenuous as it sounds. Taking these questions into account, we have conceived, crafted, and served this volume of *URBANA* so you devour it as if it were your take-out order, and no one is watching. Except everyone was watching and so were we. We pushed through injustice and fear of judgment.

Amazingly enough, our humanity developed as we continued learning what made us feel beautiful. So, what is beauty? Valuing people, acknowledging their hard work, and inspiring each other. Panic attacks, messages laced with worries, and tears. Caring is beautiful.

I can only hope you read this at some point, and if it does end up on your shelf, please dust it every so often.

XO,
Guisell Gomez
Editor-in-Chief
URBANA V10

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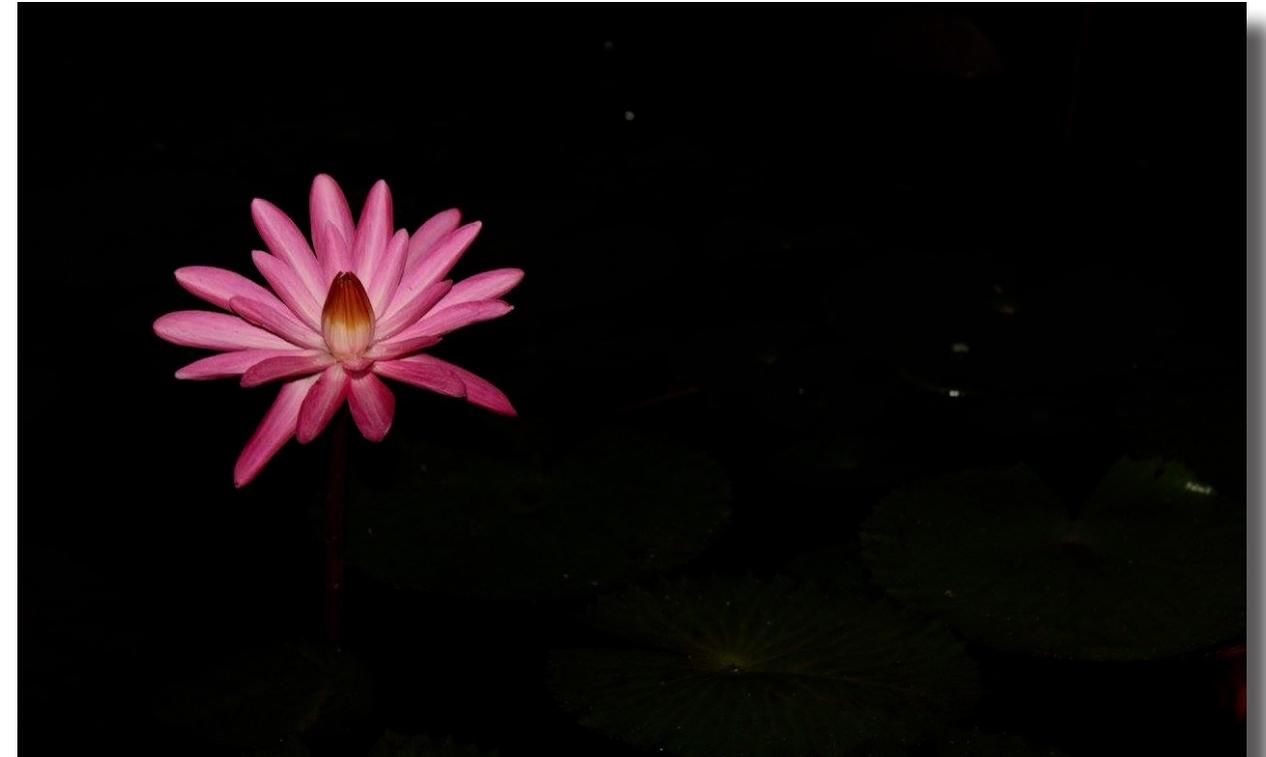
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Ambivalence

by Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

I hate him. He is the most obnoxious man I've ever met. Just thinking about his breath on my neck makes me feel nauseous. The guy is disgusting. I can't believe I will have to kiss those lips, and pretend that I like it. I will have to let him touch me. His hands will be in places that I'm proud to say are really difficult to reach. Men usually have to earn it first. I'm serving it to him on a silver platter. I will offer him the apple, and hope for him to bite it. Being the person he is, that shouldn't take too long. But, am I going to be able to pull this off? Part of me just wants to run in the opposite direction, get out of this mess, and pretend I know nothing about it. If only I could let it go. The other side of me knows that someone has to stop him from taking advantage of those girls. Someone needs to have the courage to speak up about his sick mind and his illegal deals of trading grades for sex. I guess that someone will be me.

I love him. He is the most broken man I've ever met. I learned to love the sadness in his smile, the secrets of his mind, and the silence in his lips. Despite everything he has done, I fell for him. I fell for those sharp, not so ethical, conversations we had at his office. I fell for that night, with that dress, with that song. I fell for every honest answer I got out of him. I fell for the love he had for me. Apparently, I also bit the apple. I almost gave up into my feelings, but it was already too late. I had to finish what I started. He needed to learn that his actions had consequences. He was surprised by my act, but if I know him well, he was also feeling admiration for what I was doing. I will never be able to forget the painful look in his eyes when he passed by my side, handcuffed, and he whispered "I love you." I couldn't let his so awaited words affect me, so I remained composed, hoping that deep in his heart he knew I loved him too.



Primero fue la luz / Anto Chavez

A Woman of God and Society

by Guisell Gomez

Years of lessons on morality
from the fiction section in the library

thou shall not, thou must, thou will
we all had our copies

recited by the same teacher that sometimes
conducted extracurricular activities

providing knowledge to young girls by teaching
them the different ways to scream "oh God"

that day where no one suspected anything
I overheard your devastation

crying in the bathroom stall next to me
hoping to see the godforsaken stains

on panties that had been removed
at your after school special many times

even though you were not the only one
you stayed and now wondered

why he had suggested abortion
despite its blasphemous nature

to Thy Holy Word that had been forced down our throats
before you realized you had a premature liking

to immoral oral fixations
so now you questioned yourself

and your harmless faith you thought to believe
for far too long to only end up

with a skewed moral compass
that was meant for eternal salvation

only to recognize the reality behind closed doors
where everyone interpreted it differently

than the next person
basking in a life of sacrilegious

acts that had been accepted
whether anyone admitted

that observing Sunday was felt
to be enough to save putrid souls from

damnation of the afterlife
or the damned moments

you are living with due to the
choices that screwed

who you were expected to be
by everyone without feeling

the ruthless stabbings of guilt
into a heart so empty

that you realized your sobs
were worthless and your
innocence was taken away too soon
because your child-like mind
could not handle the vulnerability
caused by the snake of your teacher
you had knelt before but prayed for
forgiveness today hoping that
Father would always love
you and your decisions
as you had been told by the Scriptures
acknowledging that perhaps sins
are independent to each situation
without any further thought
you knew what needed to be done
allowing the young women in the bathroom
to understand a bit more what it was
to be a woman of God and society



Unimportant / Luka Bilbao



Purging Raquel

by Guisell Gomez

It was one of those nights where everyone forgot rules existed, more than usual. The corners were plastered with people who barely made it into adulthood. Hell, I almost made it to adulthood. The sounds were penetrating me from all ends and I just wanted more. The night was warm and my vision was fuzzy.

“Oh man, I’m going to feel this tomorrow,” I thought as I passed by a cloud of smoke that gifted me a few jubilant smiles afterwards.

“Come over here!” my friends screamed at me from the other side of the party. “It’s story time!”

The drinks were limitless and the music kept everyone coming for more.

“Ooh, I love storytime!” I laughed joyfully as I stared into my friends’ eyes.

I also loved this time because lord knows we all needed a breather from the debauchery that we were all getting into.

“Okay guys, truth or lie?”

I took a large swig of cheap beer and I started the story.

The floor was cold and the tears raced rapidly down her face. This was her third time that day. She needed to stop, but she felt so accomplished when she finished.

“I won’t do it tomorrow,” the girl lying on the floor thought. Completing this task was becoming very exhausting yet she felt as though she was achieving her goal.

“Hey! Are you okay?” mom yelled from the other side of the door. “You’ve been in there for a while already.” Raquel heard the concern in her mother’s tone. She felt so alive but knew that she needed to stop.

“Yes, mom.” Raquel responded trying to sound unshaken. “I felt sick,” the young girl started organizing herself again.

She stood up and looked at her well-defined cheek bones poking from her face. She dabbed concealer on her dark circles while she swished and swooshed mouthwash in her mouth. She smiled at her reflection and walked out of the bathroom.

“Raquel, what took you so long?” Her mother started to argue. “We have a doctor’s appointment in thirty minutes!”

“I’m sorry, mom. I felt sick,” Raquel answered back politely.

“Well, you’re going to tell her that you constantly don’t feel well,” her mother demanded.

Raquel was a young sixteen-year old girl with a body that most would envy, or so she thought. Her dark hair was styled in a pixie cut because she had read that it would accentuate her cheekbones. Her make-up was dark yet nicely polished. Her style consisted of only dark hues and dangerous looking jewelry. Every day she wore her favorite piece of jewelry which was a studded leather bracelet that usually scared the elders. All in all, she was unknowingly epitomizing the rebellious stages of a typical teenage girl.

They left the house shortly after and headed to the much dreaded doctor’s visit. Raquel was exhausted from earlier so she dozed off in the car ride.

“Okay, Raquel wake up. We

are here,” her mom stated as the car was parked.

The woman and her daughter walked into the half-empty office.

“Oh good. It will be quick today,” Raquel’s mom said to her daughter. Raquel looked at her mother. She loved her and never wanted to disappoint her.

Her mother was a beautiful, strong woman who stood only a few inches taller than her. She made sure to always take care of herself. She could never miss her hair appointments and if she did well, that day hell manifested onto anyone she crossed paths with.

They loved each other but rarely saw eye to eye. Their relationship consisted of frequent arguments and disagreements. Raquel was starting to feel sad about this when her name was called by the front desk receptionist,

“Raquel Cardenas.” They both stood up in sync and entered the even colder section of the doctor’s office.

“Wow! You look great!” exclaimed the doctor as she entered her office to greet the



Untitled / Luka Bilbao

Cardenas.

She was seemingly impressed by the weight loss. Honestly, at this point everyone was impressed. Raquel was used to it by now. Her heart fluttered every time it was mentioned.

“So, what are you doing?” the doctor started asking her usual probing questions. She had been good at dodging these questions before but today she was exceptionally tired. She was still stuck in her trance from earlier.

“I just eat in small amounts,” Raquel responded as she fought her yawn.

“Okay, what exactly are you eating and how often?” she kept questioning.

“I don’t know. Everything my mother gives me.” Raquel was noticeably becoming uneasy by the questions. She tried to lose her eye contact with the doctor but was unsuccessful.

“Raquel, you need to be honest with me now. You look sick.” The doctor was now using her stern voice and Raquel could barely hold herself together at this point. It had been too long. It had become a chore to

pretend.

“I am fine,” she lied shamelessly again.

“Okay, tell me. Are you on drugs?” The doctor pressed her with more questions.

“Oh God, no!” Raquel rapidly became upset by this assumption. How dare her doctor think that of her? She was in utter disbelief. Her heart rate was now through the roof. She didn’t want people to think she was sick. She was now wondering if this check-up was made solely to give her mother some peace of mind.

“Raquel, you’re too smart for this but I will ask – are you purging?” That question shot up Raquel like a butcher knife decorating its blade with gushing blood from her heart.

Raquel’s eyes filled with tears made of guilt and embarrassment. She closed her eyes and replayed the reality that she’d been living. She had never felt so alive. She was finally committed to something that worked for her and her body. Father was no longer telling her that men don’t like fat women. Her jeans size had gone down to a 1 and even a 0 in some stores.

Her closet was filled with XS shirts and dresses.

It had happened. She was finally the woman everyone encouraged her to be without them even realizing it. She managed to embark on a journey that many are afraid to step into.

Her eating habits became her hobby, her job. Her mind was clouded by all that had to do with food. She figured out the amount of calories anything had. She picked the days she would have dinner. She had it all planned out. However, she always worried if she looked suspicious. Trying her best to be as secretive as possible, Raquel had a schedule for her madness. Some days she ate all three meals and went to bed without engaging in any of her favorite acts. While other days she ate twice and stuck her fingers down her throat all night long. She rejected dinner invitations and that made her feel powerful. Her mind felt satisfaction when it was starved. She became immune to fatigue and irritability. She felt her best reward was when she started seeing her collar bones poke out of her. She became obsessed with

taking pictures of them. She had it all. She felt like a winner. Her life was made. She was skinny and nothing else mattered.

She opened her eyes as a lonely tear dragged down her face.

“I’m sorry,” Raquel turned to her mom and accepted the fact that maybe she was in danger. She was feeling alive as she willingly swam closer to the shore of death every day.

“Raquel, you are anorexic and bulimic,” the doctor diagnosed as she motioned her to another room.

In that moment her entire life changed. That day she was getting another shot at life even though she hadn’t realized it then.

It’d be too lengthy of a story to tell if I’d account for every detail that happened since then. However, as expected, recovery was hellish and painful. Therapy sessions, nutritionists, and angry parents made the days darker than before. All the help that was needed was not enough until she decided for herself that it was time to change.

Eating disorders are



Last Encounter / Anto Chavez

leeches that grab onto you and suck the literal life out of you. Mind games are part of it. It is in those instances that you must be strong enough to ignore them.

It's been almost a decade since Raquel started her recovery from eating disorders. Every day is a battle for her but it has gotten better. She accepts herself now more than ever although she sometimes flirts with a chance of relapse. Nonetheless, her perseverance is what's made her the woman she is today.

People, be careful when you are judging someone. Be mindful of your words. You just never know if you are encouraging someone into harm.

I stopped telling my story and looked back at my friends.

"Damn girl!" One of them in the group exclaimed.

The rest stared at me in unison.

"What a wicked story, man."

"This is a true story for sure!" My other friend belted out.

"Yes!" All of them agreed on this.

"Correct," I told them with

a smile.

"So, who's next?" I looked around to get the next story.

"Wait," my other friend interjected.

"Isn't your middle name Raquel?" I glared back her. I decided to hydrate my dry throat with a long drink of my beer before answering.

"I'm guessing your story's next."



She was not a typical girl. She played with dolls only when she wasn't racing wooden cars with her little cousin. She wanted to be a doctor who could sing, act, and go to the moon. She was terrified of death, but she stayed on the floor next to her dog during his last hour of life. She learned to dance with the same passion she learned about astrology. She was a social girl who also enjoyed being alone. She is not a typical woman. Her fashion recreates French couture one day and bohemian free spirits the next. She is an atheist who will never assure that God doesn't exist. She finds a lecture as stimulating as the gym. She is a practical dreamer. She has a hard time when answering a yes or no question. She is an animal rights advocate who eats meat. She devours a philosophical text with the same excitement she consumes romantic novels. She follows a leader when she is not being led. She apologizes if her unapologetic truth makes you cry. She makes you smile with her weirdness.

She has never been a perfect square, nor a perfect circle.

Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

Twisted

by Stefany Amaro

The holidays were fast-approaching and the streets were beginning to smell like roasted chestnuts. I had only been living in the city for approximately a year yet I had never felt so at home. *Vogue's* holiday party was only weeks away and with all the overtime and preparations I hadn't been able to respond to Rey, my ex-boyfriend of four years, who kept calling. I was going to get to it but my life had become too hectic. I was the creative director for *Vogue* so my life tended on being wild. Besides, my roommate and best friend, Betsy, was going to my hometown in a few weeks. Perhaps I could send him something then.

As I left my house that morning, my manager texted me:

"Hey Becca, I won't be in the office today. Our new intern, Alex, will be helping you with the last details so be nice!"

Irritated was an understatement. I knew I was capable of finishing the arrangements by myself but obviously boss lady didn't think so. I couldn't stand what was

happening. As if that wasn't enough, when I was getting out of the cab, I spilled half of my espresso on my new Ferragamo Cashmere coat.

"Damn it!" I groaned loud enough for those around to look at me.

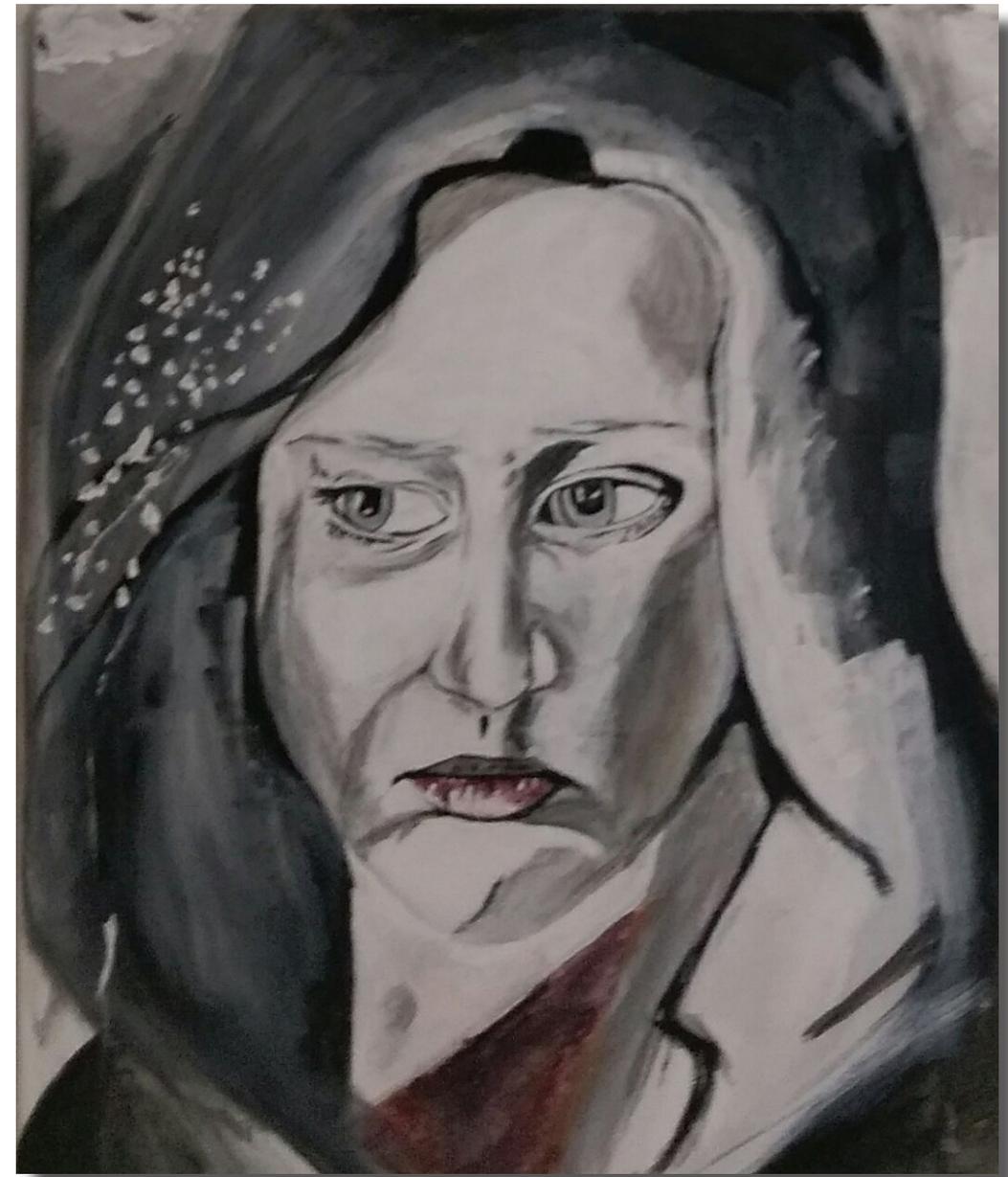
I had been saving up for it for weeks. However, I didn't have time to care for the stain so I just carried on with my day as usual. Stepping into the office I greeted as many co-workers as I could before I could get to my little Rubik's cube of an office when I stumbled into the loveliest face. Considering the morning I was having, every worry left my mind as soon as I saw her. While stuck in a trance because of her, she came up to me. I didn't even realize she had gotten that close.

"Good morning Miss Rebecca." Her voice was that of an angel. "It's a pleasure to assist you."

In that moment, she became my favorite thing to look at. Sure, I see beauty everyday, but Jesus, not like this.

I snapped out of it and replied "Morning." I felt nervous and I couldn't understand why. "Alex, right?"

Here I am, trying to



Le bonheur incomparable / Myly Fabre



Et je vous regarde / Myly Fabre

be all cool and collected until I remembered my stained coat. I looked down to disappointedly inspect the stain. To my amazement, she was handing me a tiny stain remover bottle before I had finished tilting my head from lamenting over the spot of hell.

“That was quick,” I thought to myself as I tried to hide my smirk.

After we resolved my first mess of the day, I gave her a checklist to review since I was on a tight time constraint. Before arriving to work, I thought I was going to be in a bad mood the entire day but it turned out to be the opposite. I just couldn’t believe it. I went from being upset at the fact that she was going to be shadowing me to enjoying my day now that she was around.

The first few hours, I kept having to organize my thoughts before speaking. I even caught myself overthinking the simplest things, which isn’t like me. I was known to always have a quick response. Was it the stress that was throwing me off or Alex? What was so different about this girl?

Oddly enough, the next day I was up earlier than the usual. I needed to make sure I put more effort into my outfit. This was

unlike me, but I just went with it. I wasn’t sure I was going to see Alex since Victoria, my boss, was returning. She needed to overlook the final touches for the holiday party. I wondered all morning if the intern would return to my section now that my boss was back. I kept getting up to walk around in hopes of coming across her, but I saw no signs of her. I didn’t see Alex all morning. After a few more hours passed, I gave myself a pep talk so I could remain focused on my work and not on some girl I had encountered so briefly. Once I was done regaining my composure, Victoria walked into my small office. I had a feeling she was going to ask about the intern and I really wasn’t in the mood to speak about her.

“So, how was our new little gem yesterday?” She pried as she examined the hole she had set up for me.

“Huh?” I pretended to act confused. “Oh, Alex!” Just saying her name made my insides flutter. “She was better than I thought” I stated as I typed away without looking at Victoria.

“That’s good to hear because she will be stuck with you for the rest of the week.” My boss informed me in her typical stern

voice.

“I don’t need assistance Vick,” I said even though I truly didn’t mind the news.

“I know you don’t, but we need all the help we can get and who better to show her around than you?” She gave me a smile that was laced with condescending motives and walked out of my cubicle.

I rolled my eyes long enough for her to see, but smiled as soon as she was out of my sight. I was ecstatic even though I wouldn’t admit it if anyone asked me. I’m your average loner girl. I’ve always been the girl to do group projects alone just to have it my way, but I was more than willing to work with her. Thank goodness for her help too. The entire week at the office was a shit show. Everyone was working with deadlines over their heads, bookings and invitations. I couldn’t wait for the end of the week. Once Thursday came around, I desperately needed a drink or five. I truly believed this week was going to be the end of me.

That Thursday evening, Alex and I were the last two in the building. Our laughter died down as we looked around to admire the immense progress that had been made since the week began.

The preparations for the holiday party couldn’t have been coming along any smoother. Everyone had brought their A game. Even though I was proud of the incredible work of the staff, I was losing my focus. My mind was fogged by the fact that Alex and I were alone. I kept bumping my stare into her smile as she scanned her hard work. I felt stimulated, *Fifty Shades of Grey* stimulated. I wondered if Alex felt the vibe as well. She caught me blushing as I gathered my things and looked at me as though she was about to say something, but then I received a phone call. It was Betsy. She was calling to let me know that she had made reservations to go for some drinks.

“Ladies night, huh?” Alex joined in my conversation without any shame. I looked back at her while I still had Betsy on the phone. I smirked at how ballsy this girl was.

Betsy had heard me talking about Alex all week. She knew that I found Alex attractive so she started giggling on the other side of the line. She had been teasing me about it even though I kept telling her I wasn’t into girls. I ignored her.

“So, would you like to come?” I asked, without realizing

what I had just blurted out.

“I was already planning on going,” she responded in a matter-of-fact tone. I felt that flutter again.

After hanging up with Betsy, we agreed to meet at a bar named Death around ten. Of course, me being anxious pants, I arrived earlier with Betsy. All I did was light up the screen on my phone and checked the time while I searched the room for this woman. Impatience was taking over me. It was a quarter to eleven and Alex was still nowhere in sight. As careless as I wanted to act, Betsy could feel my anxiety.

“Is your little lady friend not coming?” she asked. She sipped her third drink.

I glared back at her and was about to bitch about it when my eyes tripped over the much awaited guest. God, there she was making everyone else in the room disappear. Her entrance couldn’t have been more perfect. I’m not sure if I was the only one to notice this, but Lord, that hair flip. Did she do that on purpose? Seriously, she looked like the sweetest sin and I couldn’t wait to take a bite. Slim, dark features, and grey-blue eyes. Just thinking about her made my insides tighten. I waved at her so she could see me. I was feeling more

nervous than at work. This would be the first time we’d hang outside of work. Alex saw me waving at her and started making her way towards me. I’m grateful that Betsy was the icebreaker. Unlike me, she was friendly and easy to get along with. This guided the night in the right direction. Somehow we ended up in a conversation about our lives before living in the city and embarrassing childhood stories. The perfect topics. We had loosened up enough by this point, so we began to order shots. Part of me was still unsure if Alex was into girls or not. Hell, I was still unsure if I liked girls myself but my curiosity was consuming me.

Before I knew it, Betsy was already up and dancing. See, Betsy and I were your Blair and Serena from *Gossip Girl*. We were used to this already. We danced freely with no care in the world. It wasn’t long before Betsy left our side to dance with a handsome young man leaving Alex and me alone.

“Let’s do one more shot,” Alex said. “Just us.” Her eyes seemed to be inviting me for more than that.

I didn’t hesitate to say yes. Infatuation was guiding my decisions by this time, yet I still felt intimidated. She had this

dark desire in her eyes that kept haunting me. For someone as controlling as me, this was different and I didn't want to change it one bit. We took in the shot and laughed at our expressions when we finally were able to breathe. Her presence brought me so much joy. Then, out of nowhere, I heard my crazy Betsy.

"C'mon girlies!" Betsy shouted from across the bar.

She waited for us. Before I knew it, Alex was dragging me onto the floor to reach Betsy. We danced towards her, and during that short trip, I accepted the fact that I liked her. This realization came to me when I knew I craved more than the polite kiss on my cheek. I wanted her tongue down my throat. It was devouring me.

The night ended better than I predicted, and I got a hint of Alex liking me more than just a friend. When the cab got to her place, she grabbed my face and gently kissed my neck. Sure, I could blame the alcohol for that, but why would I want to? Betsy missed the glorious moment. Although, I don't think she would encourage my behavior since she seemed anti-gay. Either way, I was floating to my nirvana.

With just a week before the party, things were finally settling

down. Another great thing about this week was that the weather took a turn for the better. God, I missed Miami's weather sometimes. I was envious of Betsy this holiday because she was going back home for a bit. I wished I could join her, but my priority was work. However, I did take this opportunity to send some souvenirs to my parents. My parents hadn't visited yet. Being an only child only made the move harder for them. Although, I will say that my parents and I spoke as often as we could. Thank God for FaceTime! Unfortunately, not everyone received the same privilege. It had been a few weeks and I still hadn't contacted Rey. I'm not going to lie, Rey was a great guy, but the move put a strain on us. The first few months were difficult. He wasn't on board with me moving away to pursue my dreams. This made me realize that maybe I was better off without him. My ex boyfriend was tall and handsome, but the thought of him naked didn't turn me on anymore. Instead, Alex had taken over my thoughts. With just one look, she would give me goose bumps. That is a reality I could accept.

The last month had been busy for me, but I was happy. I enjoyed having Alex around. Alex



Some Place in Fake Town / Anto Chavez



Unforeseeable / Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

and I had taken the opportunity to spend a lot more time together now that Betsy was in Miami. We had wine nights after work and even went to a basketball game together. My first game to be exact. Although we spent so much time together something kept holding me back.

The night before the big party, Alex invited me over to her place for dinner. I knew it was going to be different. I no longer wanted to be confused about my feelings. After rummaging through endless mountains of clothes, I decided to wear my favorite black dress that ended right above the knees. Of course, I complemented it with matching stockings. I completed the look by pinning my hair up. I felt very confident in my outfit. After checking myself for the twentieth time, I left my house.

I rang the doorbell holding a bottle of champagne in my hand to celebrate our hard work. Not a second passed by for her to open the door. With her dark greyish eyes and pupils, the size of the moon, she stood there staring at me, the way artists look at art. My body tightened. She could've been wearing pajamas and I would still have had the same reaction. Of course she wasn't wearing

pajamas; she was wearing a satin dress that harnessed her body as perfect as I wanted it to. I walked into her tiny apartment that had a city view to die for. During dinner we told stories about old lovers and made jokes only we understood. After our meal and five glasses of champagne, I kept teasing her. I was giving her flirty faces. Yes, I was awkward, but I made her laugh which I hoped worked in my favor. Once we took a break from our silly moment, I picked up our plates from the table so I could take them to her kitchen. She followed me closely, nagging about how she didn't want me to do the dishes. She succeeded in convincing me so I sat on her kitchen counter and sipped on my sixth glass of champagne. Before I knew it, she had made her way to me. She took my glass from my hand and rested her body on mine.

"Enough stalling," she said, all while she slid herself between my legs.

I was weak, my body was tense, frozen. The moment I had dreamed of was here. She grabbed my face and kissed me. One hand on my face, the other scavenging up my dress revealing my stockings.

"You're just full of surprises, aren't you?" she whispered as she

acquainted herself with my soaked panties.

I tried to catch my breath, but I had no time for that. Her fingers were inside me making me gasp and moan louder by each tick of the clock. I didn't want her to stop. It was all hers, I was hers. She took a slight break and stepped back putting her fingers in her mouth all while staring at me. Unfinished, yet satisfied. Alex was both heaven and hell and I couldn't decide on which one I wanted to be part of. My thoughts were twisted; this was twisted. I grabbed the remainder of my glass and chugged it. Then, I jumped off the table. I pushed her against the fridge and kissed her. I felt brave. I wasn't sure of the next step, but I was moving forward. I needed to taste more than the champagne off her lips. She unpinned my hair and pushed me back.

"God, you're sexy," she purred, gazing at me with desire.

But, before I could even use my hands to play with her, my phone rang. It was Betsy. She was letting me know she would be back first thing in the morning and something about having a surprise. I didn't really pay attention since Alex was my focus. As I took a glance at the time, I couldn't help

but wonder where it had gone.

"You should get going," Alex suggested. "We have a big day tomorrow."

"Are you kicking me out?" I joked while still tasting her in my mouth. She bit her lip.

"I guess you're right." I shuffled back to the living room to grab my things.

Alex walked me to the cab and grabbed my ass as I got in. My God. I felt like I a horny teenager all over again.

That night she texted me:

"Always a pleasure to be around you, Miss Rebecca. Goodnight."

The "Miss Rebecca" comment reminded me how fucked up this was and how big of an interference, not to mention a distraction, she was to my career. For the first time in years I didn't know what I was doing and I wasn't panicking about it. Ironically, I was only two years older than her, but she had so much power over me.

The next morning Betsy woke me up to pancakes which was very weird because she wasn't a fan of breakfast. I began to tell her about my night with Alex when she nearly choked on her juice.

"So wait?" She spoke with a mouthful of waffles in her mouth.

"You're really into her?"

I shrugged. "I mean, I think so," I said with insecurity entangling my voice because I was scared of her judgment.

Betsy was by far the most critical, opinionated person I knew, after my mother. I'm not sure if it was a model's tendency to be so harsh but she always let it out. I tried to change the topic and asked her about Miami. It was no use; the vibe had shifted. I didn't take it seriously because tonight was the big night. I had other important things to worry about.

"Your invitations are on your nightstand. Don't forget them!" I screamed as I ran out the door.

That morning Vicky and I got in every last detail and she was pleasantly surprised.

"Such great work, such little time, Becca." Her face lit up. "This is incredible."

Sarcastically, I replied, "What did you expect?" She nodded and walked away.

When I got home to get ready for that night, I found Betsy had already left. This was unusual coming from her. The only thing we have in common is how late we arrive to places. I figured she wanted to get all of the gossip

before anyone so I just went on to doll up.

Once I arrived to the venue, I met up with Alex. She was wearing an off-the-shoulder red, sparkly dress and her hair in a 1920's style. I could almost see the fire she left behind her as she walked. The devil himself I tell you.

"You look sent from above," she whispered in my ear as she greeted me with a gentle kiss on the cheek.

I had on a light, golden shimmering dress that covered everything but my back, and my hair up in a big pageant bun. The venue was decorated beautifully: big chandeliers, a huge Christmas tree in the middle, it was perfect. It wasn't long before Alex got me a glass to start off the night right.

"Cheers to us and what's to come!" Exclaimed Alex as she passed me the cocktail.

"Cheers!" I responded in my best attempt at using my sultry voice before rushing to work.

I greeted guests for what seemed like hours before I met up with Alex again. Almost immediately, she guided me into what appeared to be an empty dressing room. At this point everything I had worked so hard

for was on the line. I was uncertain if it was worth the risk, but I felt so alive. While I was being dragged, I wondered where Betsy was, but quickly snapped back into what was happening. We kissed. This time twice as intense as the first time. Probably because we shouldn't be sneaking around at a work event. I felt every inch of my body light up. This was just so exhilarating. We traveled each other's bodies with hands so curious when all of a sudden the door opened.

"Becca, what are you doing?" The face staring back at me grimaced at the sight. It was Rey. I could feel my face losing color. What do I say?

"Rey wait!" I shouted, as I followed his long and quick stomps. I heard Alex walk out, perhaps more confused than me. Before I could reach Rey, I bumped into Betsy whom I realized could've been the only person that would've invited him. I rushed behind him but felt Betsy try to yank my arm and stutter what I was sure was a shitty apology. I didn't stop. Betsy wasn't a priority right now.

I didn't know which situation to deal with first, but I knew he deserved an explanation, especially since I had avoided him for so long. I approached him,

practically holding him down so we could talk. He shut me up before I began and started screaming.

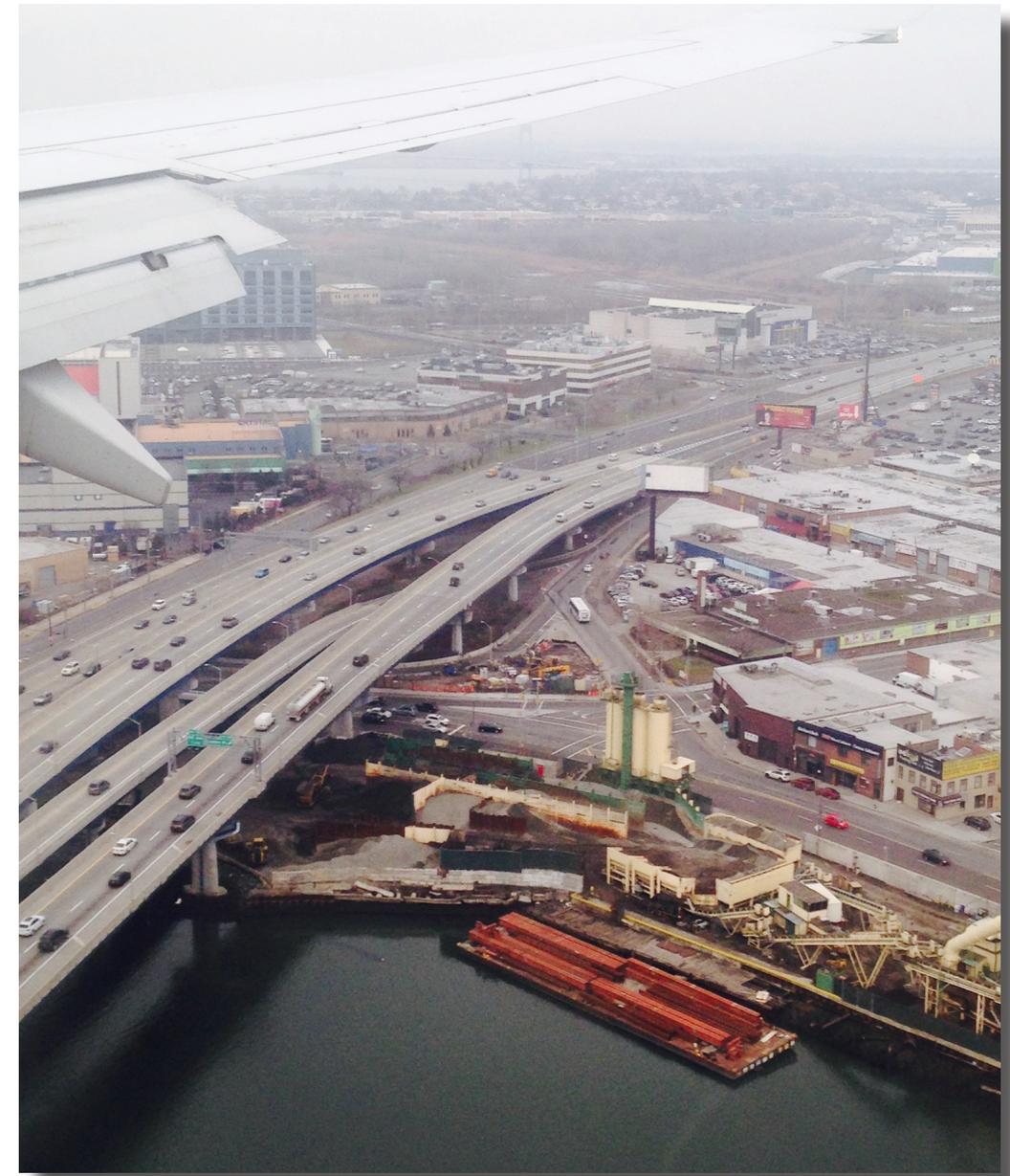
"For weeks I've been trying to reach you, and this is what I find!" He gave me his face of disappointment. "This is what you left everything behind for? How would your parents, boss and everyone feel if they were to find out?" He was calming down at this point. "I come here to surprise you and apologize but for what? I'm the one surprised and on top of that, humiliated."

Just when I thought he was done unloading his anger, he grabbed me by my wrist looking deep into what felt my soul with his furious, coffee brown eyes.

"If you pick me, we could all pretend this never happened." He started scaring me. "Or if you pick your little experiment, you can say goodbye to your dream job."

"Wait, what?" My voice trembled. Was he really giving me an ultimatum?

"So, what's it going to be Rebecca?"



Guardati intorno / Anto Chavez

Anonymous / Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez



Books. Pens. Papers. Trees. Flores. Frutas. Honey. Bees. Sweet.
Salty. Sea. Beaches. Sandglass. Sand. Gente. Smiles. Huellas. Sun.
Hot. Coffee. Cuba. Music. Dance. Feet. Cold. Ice Cream. Snow. Red
Hot Chili Peppers. Rock n' Roll. Oasis. Dessert. Desert. Lonely.
Tears. Tea. Nature. Green. Negro. Red. Roses. You. YO. Me. Us. U.S.
America. América Latina. Love. Poems. Writing. Books.

Luis E. Prieto

Split Decisions Within / Rey Jaffet



Remnants of a Comfort Zone / Rey Jaffet

Que?

by Joshua Horton

Since I grew up in Fort Lauderdale, I liked to believe that I was exposed to a wide variety of cultures. After all, there are many Colombian, Italian, and Chinese restaurants near my house. It seemed to me that my knowledge of cultural diversity was about as good as it would ever be. Boy, was I wrong.

My most cherished childhood memories are with my father's large family. To my surprise, they all had one thing in common. Somehow they had never left their hometown of Miami. In fact, my father is able to trace his family all the way back to his own great grandfather, "Tars" Horton, who was born around the mid to late 1800s.

I was told by the elders of my family, that during that time Miami was in the middle of nowhere. Apparently, in those times, Miami was merely marked by orange groves and plantations. This was, of course, a Miami that

I never knew.

The Miami that I knew, or thought I knew, was simply my family's hometown. In this place there is not one person in my family who speaks Spanish. I would have never thought that there would have been any need to. After all, I naively thought, none of us live in a Spanish-speaking area. In fact, my grandfather, who was about as much of a Miamian as possible, always had a thick southern accent just as someone who grew up in Tennessee. I remember my father talked about the Spanish friends he had in high school, and about the Mariel boatlift which brought in hundreds of refugees from Cuba into Miami. Other than that, I had no idea what Miami was truly like.

This all changed when I attended college. As expected, I was excited to go to a school in an area that I thought I knew so well. In this area, my family would only be a phone call away. I never expected for my view of Miami to change, but it did.

Upon moving into my apartment, my first realization





came when I went out with my new roommate, who was new to Miami. We went to a supermarket to buy ping pong balls. I had been bragging about showing him around Miami because I practically grew up here. The embarrassment began to settle in as we were both struck with confusion because every employee that we asked a question responded with,

“Que?”

I didn't understand. How could anyone be able to live and work here without speaking English?

As we approached every person in this supermarket, we finally concluded that this must have been some type of international market for Spanish-speaking people. We reluctantly went to a Publix, where the cashier had to find a customer to translate for him. I was astounded. How could this be possible? No doubt I had a lot to learn about this new area I thought I knew.

It's been a year and a half since that incident and I can proudly say that I have embraced

a new culture that I now admire. This most certainly isn't the Miami that my grandfather and father knew. However, this is the Miami that I grew to know.

So, every morning when I am sipping on my colada listening to the group of men shouting at each other in Spanish, I can't help but think to myself that I absolutely love this place.

I Stand

by Tess Cusidor

To the Indigenous People of the
Peace River
Firm, Earth ground
Heels pressed
Hands held
You stand
I stand

Rip scabs of grass up from dirt
As we turn to run
From bloodied batons
From bruised skin hugging
broken bones

Hands held up over our faces
Over our voices
To stop the beatings
You bruise
I bruise

Tie your hands together
To stop with words, with ink,
with screams
My hands are scarred with angry
ink
You stand
I stand

My feet are far from you
But the Earth trembles below me
With the strength of batons and
screams
I hear you

My hands catch the same water
However light or heavy of led
Stained of the blood
Drenched in bleach
Your people
My history

Hands digging in Earth
Turning into shoveling
Greed grew mound by mound
Stabs in the ground
Throwing life into the piles of
debris
But it lies one over the other
Finding its bother spud and
sister roots
Mother sun
Together in heaps

Slicked in oil
The blood that runs in
Your land
My land

The deep hums of the Earth
tremble the ground
Echoing the chants and stomps of
the people of the wild and colors
No more shall your bodies be
marred
No more shall you stand alone
Your fight
My fight



Arroz y Maduro / Rey Jaffet

Arrebato de un sueño

by Anto Chavez

Rodeada de mentira,
Aunque llena de verdad,
Que muestra como suspira
Por su idealismo visto anomalidad.

No entiende si es equivocación,
O quizás una simple alucinación
El pensar en ser mujer
Y tantos estigmas aborrecer.

Ella discute, causa controversia.
El padre sigue... La atormenta.
Él ensucia su consciencia
Y a su hija escarmienta.

En una revolución ella sueña,
Aspirando ser la dueña,
No de aquel desconocido,
Sino de su propio apellido.

Quiere huir y no volver,
Su futuro perseguir.
Lo más sensato es desaparecer,
Pues, ¡Qué difícil es reír!

Vivir, viajar, saber.
Ella anhela conocer
Algo más allá de esas esposas
Que solo logran mantenerla ansiosa.

Está al borde de la locura
¿Cómo debe soportar tanto?
Vivir a su lado es una tortura.
Es imposible oprimir su llanto.

Ya se ha vuelto monotonía,
Aunque de igual forma no sonreía.
El cotidiano atrevimiento de aquel desconocido
Ha dejado su gran deseo más que destruido.

Ella no ha perdido las esperanzas,
Confía en un universo paralelo,
Ella, quien con su alrededor tiene pocas semejanzas.
Ella, quien de límite tiene el cielo.

90 Miles

by Eliseo Wong

May 27th 2004 was the day when I first saw Santiago Cabrera. He stood in center field, with his arms crossed over his chest and chewed gum furiously. At first, I thought he had a baseball glove in his mouth, but as I trotted towards him it started transforming into his enormous, saggy, red lips. His big, square, shiny forehead was covered in a yellow, almost solid sweat. His round eyes were looking at me, and I felt like they intended to intimidate me. The black rounded vacuum that was his face inhaled all the oxygen on the baseball field, leaving none for other people. Every time that he exhaled you could see the grass moving in that direction. If he was the wolf in "The Three Little Pigs," he could have taken down their brick house just by breathing on it.

Everything about Santiago was gigantic; starting by his 6 foot 5 inch stature, and that was only when he was not infuriated, because when he was, Godzilla

would be a mere lizard next to him. He had a pair of mountains on his shoulders, if you could call that big pile of muscles shoulders. His iron chest was always compressed against his suffocated shirt. The same filthy, unwashed shirt that he took every single time to practice. His back was a scary sight, a whole habitat of lions, zebras, and elephants could live on there if he were to lie down. But he never did; he was always standing. In fact, I never saw Cabrera sitting down.

Santiago Cabrera was not a smart man, he had only gone to first grade, and at 32 years of age, he was not going back to school to learn to read. He only knew how to count to four, and I believe it was because there were only four bases on the baseball field. He had the Rocky Balboa voice, that kind that you had to pay close attention to distinguish if he was actually talking or barking at you. He was the product of a communist society where everyone was forced to do what the government chose for your life. It was almost impossible to believe that such man would accommodate to these rules. Maybe that was the reason

why he constantly muttered in frustration: "you could not be anyone in this stupid fucking country."

Cabrera was not always like this. In his young, spirited years, he used to play for the Cuban National Baseball team. He was the best center fielder the island had produced since 1925. He was a beast. His muscular and potent body made everything look possible while he was standing in the field, ready to react to the slightest motion of the universe.

Every team in the big leagues wanted to contract him, waiting and hoping for Santiago to step on American soil. But in that communist country in which he lived, no one had the choice to leave and play for another team. Consequently, he started playing in Los Industriales, where they paid him 367 pesos per month, which was almost 20 American dollars instead of the 20 million the Boston Red Socks were offering him. Eventually, he tried to escape Cuba but he failed. The government caught him. His punishment was to teach young, rising baseball prodigies, and since then he had that angered look on his face.

Even though I feared him at the beginning, as time passed by I started to admire him. His passion and love for the game was something every human being respected. It was heartbreaking to see all that talent go to waste.

Growing up in the same communist dictatorship as Cabrera, I started to see myself becoming him. Although I was no baseball phenomenon, I did love learning. Whether it was indulging in new breakthroughs in science or in the history of great ancient empires, I would be happy. My fascination with knowledge extended to understanding the different types of government and the variety of culture that this world provided. Let's not get into philosophy, technology, and religion - I just wanted to know it all.

But, just like Cabrera's, my passion was not encouraged by the government. Instead, it was censored by the same government that bragged to the world that its country had a literacy rate of 99.7%. The same government in which all schools were free. It was the same government that refused to tell the world their students

only learned what they wanted them to learn and the same government in which everyone's education was interrupted at 18 years old to pass an obligatory military service. All the same.

Despite all of that, I never lost my focus. I continued trying to learn new material. I always asked my grandma, who lived in the U.S, to send me articles, magazines, DVDs, or anything that she could get her hands on about science, government, and technology. I did everything and anything that I could to satisfy the hunger that was not fed in school. Just like Cabrera, I waited anxiously for the day when I could finally leave this "stupid fucking country," as he described it.

On April 27th 2008, I finally received a letter that disclosed a date for my family to attend an interview in which we would be given a chance to leave the island. Four months later, we found ourselves inside an airplane crossing the Straits of Florida. After 90 miles and 45 minutes, I arrived to Miami International Airport.

Finally, I was at a place where my passion would be promoted and fortified. In this

place I did not have to hide to learn about a government different to mine. Here, information about almost anything was just one click away. There were libraries with endless pages that sang my favorite tunes about empires and societies. I arrived to a country where, eventually, my own story would begin.

To many people 90 miles is just a number, a distance, but to me it is much more than that. It is the difference between frustrations and realizations, nightmares and dreams, as well as censorship and freedom. To me, 90 miles is the difference between Cuba and the United States. Now every time I think of those 90 miles, the first thing that comes to my mind is Cabrera and the millions of people whose dreams will probably be repressed by a government just like mine almost were. 90 miles also remind me that I am lucky enough to be here to pursue my dreams. Hopefully, one day I can make a difference in the life of someone who may not feel as fortunate. Life can change.





She hates labels. Does she know who she is? Probably not. She lives day by day. She fears failing others. She cares about you, even if you don't know it. She won't show it. She's too far from perfection. She hates judging, even though she does it. She'd die for peace. But does that make sense? She sees a world without war reachable. She will reach it. You will reach it. And that day, she might know who she is.

Anto Chavez

Flawless / Luka Bilbao



The Dream That Killed America

by Guisell Gomez

Silence greeted anyone who dared to step outside. Not a single cloud was in the sky. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't stop thinking of those once upon a times while he savored the last drops of his cheap blend. He looked up with perspiration that evenly glossed his face as he painted the air in front of him with a thick, grey smoke. His mouth had become drier ever since he started smoking that crap. Unfortunately, it was the only thing available. So much had changed. It had been five years.

"Blake ol' buddy o' mine," the mailman startled the pensive man out of nowhere.

"Good day, pal." Blake stood up to grab his insignificant articles of mail.

"Nice day, eh?" Blake was never one to entertain small talk but he knew his mailman was the friendly type.

The mailman chuckled, "more like rough day out here, mate." He took a deep breath, "Can't believe it was five years ago."

Blake dropped his stare when he heard this. He disliked the fact that he had to live in this part of history.

"Well, these letters ain't going to send out themselves," the mailman quickly added once he realized his buddy didn't take his comment to liking.

"See ya around, 'right," and he continued his mailing route.

"Take care now," Blake half-heartedly said to the mailman and went back to his thoughts.

Five years sped before Blake's eyes. The celebrations, the cheering, and the pride.

"America, America!" he heard the initial enthusiasm of the supporters. He saw himself chanting too. He was lively. The excitement seemed to be never-ending. "Our country is ours again!" He briefly recalled the day he turned on his TV set to see what he felt to be at that time a victorious moment. Blake shook

his head in disbelief.

Blake was a middle-aged man who had been losing his hair rapidly. He had piercing blue eyes and skin as white as a snowflake. Blake was currently residing in the home that he had bought with his hard-earned money from decades ago. The house needed work but it was still rather presentable. He rocked back and forth in his chair thinking about the good old days of Davie, Florida. The jobs were overflowing. Fast and good money was there to stay for a while. Or so they all thought. He had lived the American dream. The dream that killed America. He stood up and started making his way into town.

The streets had been deserted for quite some time now. The war had shaken everyone up. He tripped over a beat up Confederate flag.

"Fuck," he muttered as he kicked it away from him. Blake had a flashback of a few years ago when the streets were filled with those flags. They all waved happily with wind that was laced with oppression and hate. These thoughts disgusted him.

He couldn't stop seeing what his country had become.

"It was supposed to be great," he overheard a local retelling the story to his little kid as he passed by them.

Blake interrupted the mam. "It was going to be great. You would think the story gets better to say after a while."

"Never gon' get better," the man answered back to the passerby.

Blake turned back to the man and decided to help him explain the situation to the child. He deserved to know. Besides, his father looked more lost than we all were at some point.

"Do you mind if I explain it to the boy?" Blake asked for permission.

"Go right ahead. Lord knows I can't begin to put it into words," the man had eyes redder than that of bloody streets.

"I'm Todd by the way," as he extended his hand for a handshake.

"Blake at your services," Blake shook his hand firmly.

"And this is little Steve." The father introduced his son.

"Well, hello there, Steve."

Blake flashed a grin that seldom visited his face.

"It's quite the story so have yourself a seat," as he motioned the little boy to sit next to him in the sidewalk. The boy's father went on to sit next to him and lit his cigarette.

"Look here, sonny," Blake let out a dangerous cough, "one thing I want you to remember is that you must be careful what you wish for." The boy blankly stared back.

"You would think we'd all be happy," Blake began his story, "you'd think that our decisions from then would had left us pleased yet we are more miserable than ever as you can tell. We should've heard the warnings."

His eyes watered. "It didn't hit me until a civil war was declared."

"Everything was changing and everyone knew it. Before the shit hit the fan, a lot of us were happy with our decisions. Many had chosen him yet there seemed to be more coverage from the opposing side. We couldn't understand it. I couldn't understand."

He breathed deeply at this point, "were they not realizing that we were about to have money again?"

"Money was coming to our homes after all this time. Who wouldn't want that?" Blake questioned this, hoping for an answer that would never circle back to him.

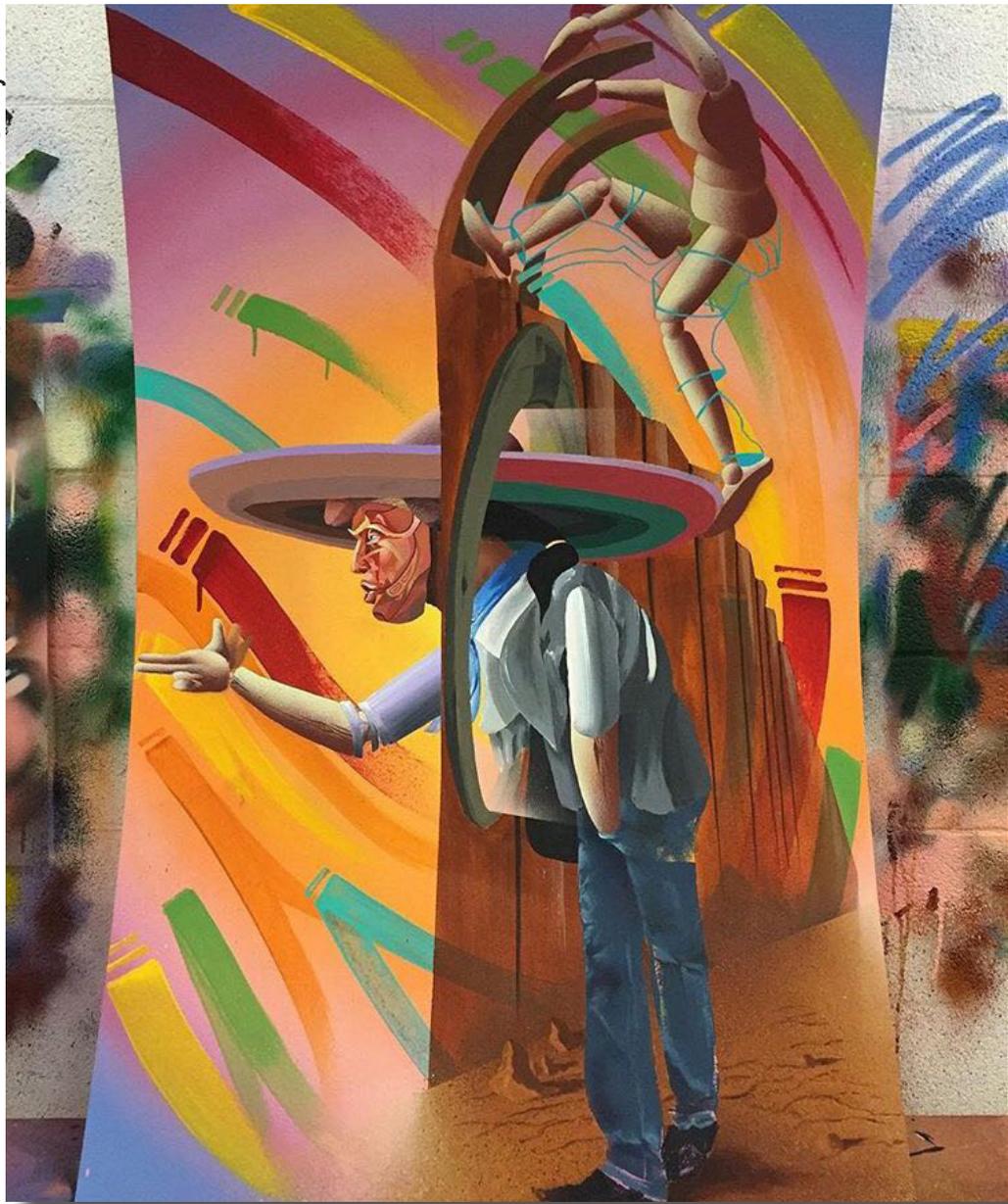
"However, the protests grew larger throughout his time in the administration." Blake recounted allowing the words to drown in the sea of nothingness around him.

"I'll tell you this much, I felt happy", he continued on with the history lesson, "our country was going to be amazing just like everyone had always envisioned it."

"Okay, I thought I was happy." Blake stopped abruptly and took a deep breath as though he needed to compose himself.

"Okay, where was I?" He choked up for a second.

"Oh, yes. Happiness." He smirked darkly at Little Steve, "that was a load of shit, son. We were forgetting about the true value of America. Its people. And boy, did we learn first-handedly



about the negligence we were normalizing.”

“Blake, wait. Are you really going to tell him that part?” Steve’s dad interjected in the middle of his storytelling.

“Todd, he has to know one way or another unless you don’t want me to.” Blake responded to the father’s preoccupied question.

“Guess he has to learn somewhere now that computers and cellphones are gone. Where else that boy gon’ get his information?” Todd puffed on his cigarette and lifted his chin in approval.

“Look, Steve. You have to understand that what happened was something no one would’ve imagined,” Blake resumed his story as he stared at Todd’s chain smoking habit.

“National Massacre Day will haunt me forever and it’s time you take some of that part of America with you.” Little Steve looked up at Blake with eyes that would no longer shoot out innocent stares after today. Blake sighed and took out a paper that had been man-handled too many times before from his wallet.

“I copied this from a news website a few months after that damn catastrophic day. I wrote this almost right before we all went dark.” The paper clothed his rugged hands and he began to bring the words to life:

“National Massacre Day was the name donned on the day where all the people in his administration allowed “Non-Americans” be pulverized once and for all. The movement started early that morning. The official orders were given to execute anyone who didn’t agree with the administration. This was one of the many erratic messages he often gave to the American people. America was worried, or better yet, “Non-America” was worried. What were we becoming? What did we become?”

Blake looked up after putting the note away. His eyes looked empty.

“I can recall Mama’s concern that day,” he spoke it in an almost-whisper, “she tried to knock some sense into me. She spoke about them like she spoke about the Americans, with love. Them crazy women, the homosexuals, the illegals, she

saw them the same.”

“God, how I wish I had seen them the same as well at that time.” Blake started wiping the tears that were freely leaving their trails on his hardened face.

“I’m sorry, Steve,” Blake sniffled, “I’m sorry this is your nation.”

Little Steve just stared at the floor while he listened to the story. Despite his young age, he had a lot of world in him.

Steve spoke for the first time in that moment, “Please go on, sir.” Blake was surprised at this but picked up his story where he left off.

“They were everywhere,” he started narrating again, “the people we thought we didn’t need. There were some brave ones. Mama begged me not to go to the streets but I had to. This was to honor my goddamn country! I left my home with my shotgun, magazines, my replacement gun – a Glock- and a first-aid kit in my bag. I was ready. Our country was ours again! His administration had approved this and we were on our way,” there was a brief pause before moving forward with what needed to be shared.

“As I walked towards the streets, I saw my friends being stabbed and shot in ways you’d think you would only see in video games,” the story-teller lamented, “head shots, shots to the heart, some even had them open their mouths so they could have them suck on their gun-powered death.” His face grimaced in disgust. “I hadn’t realized they were part of the wrong crowd.”

Blake cleared his throat, “I shouted and tried to defend them at this point but it was no use. The blood splattered all through my streets, through my America.”

“Then, as always, they planned something even larger,” Blake explained while stumbling over words, “at the stroke of six, shots were heard all around. They started killing themselves. All of them.”

“The Non-Americans had put bullets to their own heads,” he let out a soft weep, “could you believe that, son?”

Blake’s story kept getting more morbid by the second.

“They were dropping dead at all corners. Thousands of bodies laid lifeless before us and there was nothing to do but to stare at

the arrival of crimson-stained death. Mama tried warning me. She told me not to engage in such acts. I should’ve listened.”

By this point, Blake sobbed uncontrollably. “Mama…” He struggled to make out anything after mentioning her name. “Fuck. It never gets better,” Blake wiped his free-flowing snot on his shirt.

“She had gone shot herself too.” Todd was inconsolable at this point. “She always stood with all peoples and these people got her complete support from day one.” I stumbled over her frigid body after my celebratory drinks with those I used to call buddies. “My mama had killed herself all because we allowed our bullshit views get in our way about what we thought America should be.”

Little Steve’s eyes kept widening as he continued drinking the truth through his ears. After Blake took a five-minute long break to cry his guilt off, he continued a story that shouldn’t had ever existed.

“We disposed of the bodies by burning them all while burning America at the same time. It took months for the blood to start

washing away,” Blake whimpered softly. Everyone on the sidewalk was crying. They hugged each other.

“Little Steve, power ain’t nothin’ but a fucking joke,” Blake managed to get the words out of him. “Promise me you won’t do anything like that as long as you live. Promise us you understand that it is how Mama said, we the people,” Blake almost pleaded.

“Don’t worry,” replied Steve. “I won’t fuck up like y’all did,” and he stood to make his way out of the the group that gave him the worst history lesson he never knew he needed. The two men watched the boy walk into the streets as they struggled to control their tears.

“So much for America the great, huh?” Todd breathed out as he removed his last cigarette from his box.

Flores de árbol torcido

by Luis E. Prieto

Cuando aparezca mi nombre y despierte
Estampidas de elefantes,
Acompañaré el sueño de los vencidos.
Cuando al pronunciarse provoque
Una furia desmedida de gigantes,
Y el llanto sempiterno de los pobres,
tan desapercibido,
Inventaré seudónimos para aliviar el arrebató
De esos esclavos rencorosos del pasado,
De esos tontos caprichosos del presente.

Cuando me ate un jodido gentilicio
Al metal oxidado de grilletes políticos,
Y digan que flores no crecen
Del tronco de un árbol torcido,
Me azotará su prejuicio,
Sufriré el enfado y ardor de sus látigos,
Mas no incitaré el vuelo empedernido
De los cuervos,
Ni la morbosa curiosidad de los extraños.
No atenderé a la agresión de los ineptos,
Para predicar así, en silencio,
La absoluta verdad de mis paisanos.

Rodando, cayendo, callando

by Anto Chavez

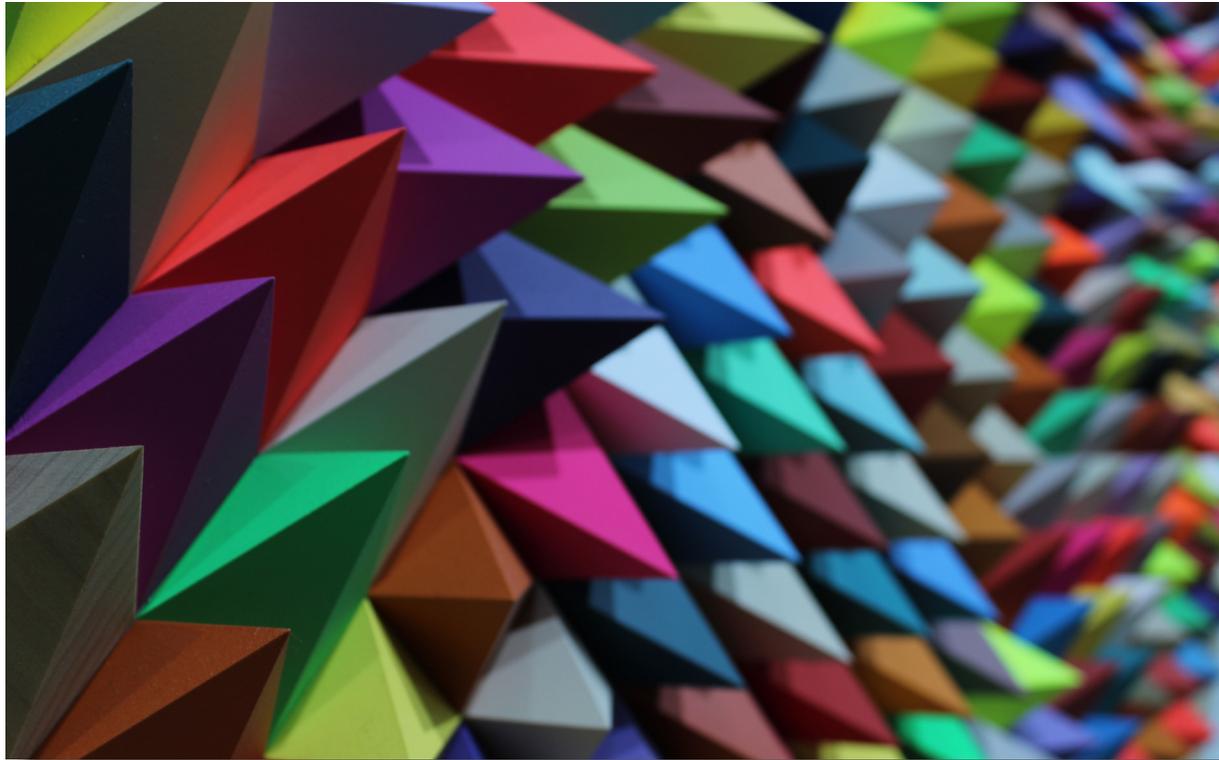
¡Complejidad inexplicable que mueve sociedades! Difícilmente tenemos tiempo de indagar quiénes somos en este juego de mil. Al billar lo aclaman al azar, pero al compararlo con la realidad, son más cálculos que casualidades. Cada mañana empieza el entretenimiento para algunos, el calvario para otros. Los jugadores superiores, aquellos veteranos, van calculando la jugada con gran atención e inquietud. Por supuesto, rogando que lleguen a tener algún parecido eventualmente. Cómodamente esperan, con sumo cuidado, el momento en que varias piezas se alineen y puedan ser manipuladas con facilidad. Tantos colores, tantos enfoques y desenfoques que les hacen analizar una y otra vez el empujón correcto ¿O el deseado? La definición se pierde en un laberinto repleto de intereses codiciosos. Al mismo tiempo se encuentran del 1 al 15 tratando de predecir su destino; el

camino al que serán impulsados y la posible solución para no convertirse en atropelladores. El problema es que es mucho más sencillo no tener la solución. El misterio resulta pasajero, mucho más fugaz y llevadero. La ignorancia les exonera de toda culpa, o eso prefieren creer. En una mesa ruedan en cualquier dirección, como simples piezas que ni siquiera saben el efecto que han desatado. A su vez, es imposible señalar con los dedos, pues es una partida sin escape alguno. Solo queda ser la pieza unicolor y sin rasgos sobresalientes para evitar la fortuna del apaleado, al que mal tratan y empujan hacia el abismo de la marginalidad. Si esto no logra evitarlo, al menos pospone el inevitable abatimiento. Lisas, rayadas, incluso la atrevida que ha decidido mostrarse solo negra. Todas caerán. “En la unión está la fuerza”, gritan algunos rebeldes y estrategias que se juntan para no desmoronarse. Los participantes se dan turnos para derrumbar las barricadas, de manera competitiva y violenta. No hay espacio para dos ganadores. O, para no sucumbir al cinismo, el espacio sí existe, pero compartirlo no está en el plan de dichos guerreros oportunistas.

Incuestionable no llamar esta disputa infinita por su nombre:



Aquel universo rectangular / Anto Chavez



Afiladas, incisivas y enfocadas / Anto Chavez

atrocidad. El rompecabezas callado intenta sobrevivir, alcanzando una resistencia inesperadamente duradera. ¡BOOM! Cae la primera. Esto genera temor e incertidumbre del 1 al 15 (omitiendo al ya caído 3). A este punto empiezan a dividirse, no tiene sentido tratar de correr hermanados, si los expertos han probado que eso no los detendrá. Se supone que existen algunas reglas en este “pasatiempo” (como lo llaman los especialistas en la placentera opresión). Pues, lamentable realidad en la que no parecen ser de importancia; nadie las sigue, las habla o las respeta. Pasa el tiempo, nada pasa. Siguen rodando, siguen cayendo, siguen callando. El silencio se transforma en un lamento de cobardía para muchos, mientras para otros es un arma de supervivencia. Al fin de cuentas, todos los perjudicados quieren lo mismo: paz, y ni una tiza polvorienta en cada taco borrará su derecho de vivir en armonía. La mancha queda, mas no se borra. Acorralados en las esquinas de un rectángulo desesperanzado corren la voz acerca de los trucos más eficientes para no ser succionados por alguno de seis agujeros. Unos, comienzan a practicar artimañas tramposas y se salvan sacrificando el trabajo de otros. El riesgo se vuelve

mayor, no es seguro confiar en nadie.

El jugador que luce estar perdiendo al observar el doloroso puntaje de esta partida refuta la derrota venidera. Predecible, si tengo la audacia de acotar, se veía venir que ninguno renunciaría a una gloria que ambos daban por ganada desde el inicio. Si los pocos fragmentos de autenticidad que quedan en la mesa no rompen el molde homogéneo cuanto antes, esta partida dejará más caídos de los esperados. La diferencia en ser diferente, ahí yace la clave del triunfo. Sin necesidad de etiquetas superficiales; ni números, ni colores, ni rayas. Al unísono, gritar el canto de la resistencia. Unidos, mas no iguales. Brilla el contraste de unos con otros, abriendo aquel oscuro universo rectangular a una nueva táctica. Ahora las intenciones son afiladas, incisivas y enfocadas en voltear los roles predeterminados. Enfocadas en levantar a los caídos que tuvieron que seguir el mismo prototipo por años, quienes no se atrevían a distinguirse de los demás por una razón u otra. La diferencia que marca ser diferente, siempre superará al triple cualquier injusticia social. Esa amena locura de ser diferente, teniendo siempre, la deferencia de diferir.



Autoretrato / Anaridia Burgos

She has a penchant for life, joy, and adventure. She believes that life is a journey where one encounters faith, love, and passion but knows that there are also fears, disappointments, and lies. She has experienced them all, but still moves forward. She urges others to see past their mistakes because there's always hope in a new day. She believes in not letting purpose die and viewing each day as an opportunity that cannot be wasted. She dreams of her future, our future, and how together we can aim to build each other up.

Anaridia Burgos

Philia

by Cecilia Ray Chaves

“I simply do not understand why you cannot come with me, Percival.” His wife’s voice cracked at the end and he risked a glance at her.

She was still standing just a foot inside of his study, the veins in her neck bulging from tension. Harriet was scrunching her eyebrows so hard that her forehead was full of lines, like the various forks of a river. Percival took a deep breath. He really did not want to snap at her. But, the conversation hadn’t been going anywhere for the past 20 minutes.

“Listen sweetheart, I have work. Father needs my help. But, if you really want, I can make Collin take a message to him, telling him that I’ll take a short holiday to the beach estate.” Percival grabbed a clean sheet of paper and dipped his pen in the ink; he pretended to write as he waited for her to give in.

Percival’s parents—the great Albert and Elsa Monroe—never truly liked Harriet. Still, they knew she was the best match

for Percival. And sure enough, she was. Harriet was a good partner for him, patient to his mood swings and understanding of the times he needed to be alone. His parent’s approval though had been Harry’s ultimate goal in life.

Finally, he heard Harriet exhale. He looked up and saw her shoulders almost sag before she quickly got her composure back. Percival smirked knowing he won the battle.

“Fine, I’ll go by myself on the condition that Collin comes with me.” This request took Percival off guard.

He was glad that he was looking down at his papers. Collin was his personal valet, yet Harry seemed to not even care that she had her personal handmaidens. She always asked only for him when she went around town. Collin often told him that his wife liked hearing about his life back at home; it warmed his heart. But now, he was apprehensive of letting him go with her. It would be a dangerous request to deny.

“Whatever you want, my love.” He forced a sweet smile.

“Wonderful.” She skipped towards him and gave him a kiss

in his hair. “I’ll begin preparations to leave immediately. Could you please let Collin know that he is to come with me?” She left the room, leaving him even more uneasy.

“Mr. Monroe, welcome. Please do come in. I’ll let her lady know you’re here.” He entered the wide oak double doors of his parent’s town mansion.

As he took off his top hat, he could see himself reflected on the polished marble floor, albeit a little distorted.

“There’s no need, John,” he told the family butler, who’s been with all of them since he was a young schoolboy.

“Can you please just let Constance know I’m here? I want to speak with her first.” John bowed his head slightly and elegantly went up the wide set of stairs that swallowed up most of the foyer.

It was the first dinner he was going to have with his parents without Harriet in years. His parents were delighted. Constance not so much, she got along well with Harry. She said there was something more to her, if he only paid more attention. She

also told him to tell her his secret, again. He vehemently refused, again.

Harriet was due to arrive tomorrow morning after her two week long trip to their beach estate, with Collin. The thought made his stomach twist, and he could barely maintain his smile. He really had wished that Harriet hadn’t taken him with her. But, it would have been too suspicious to refuse. Percival looked around the familiar room. The wallpaper was ivory-colored and patterned with fleur-de-lis. Tables with vases full of different wildflowers were pushed up against the walls. Everything in its place, exactly how it had always been. Only Percival was changed, different and mismatched in the large room.

He heard the clanking of shoes and turned to their sound. His sister was also different, he realized as she walked down the stairs with a nice pastel pink gown. Her dark hair set in an intricate knot on her head, her dark eyes an exact copy of his. A month ago, on her sixteenth birthday, she had her debut into society. Her mother said that

she had an extreme success with suitors.

“To what are you staring so intensely, brother? Have you fallen in love with me as well?” She smiled wickedly.

He laughed, she’d always been mischievous and crude with her words. And he didn’t think any man would take that from her.

“Well, little sister, we all know you don’t have the right parts.” Constance looked around the empty foyer before going over and smacking him in the arm.

“You ninny! Don’t say that so loud. The servants could hear.” She hugged him then. For all her blunt and playfulness, she was always serious when it came to his secrets.

He came back home late after work the next day. Harriet had arrived that morning, most likely. He made it just in time for dinner. When he got into his house, his butler Niles was waiting, and next to him—Collin.

“Good evening Mr. Monroe,” they both said in unison and bowed their heads slightly.

“Good evening, Niles.” He

looked over at Collin and gave him a smile. “Collin, did you enjoy the beach?”

“Yes sir. Thank you sir. But I prefer the city, sir.” He gave him a tight lipped cautious smile.

He went straight for the drawing room, where he found his mother, father, sister, and wife; all sitting and avidly chatting. It was a rare sight, but a welcomed one, as opposed to the strife.

“Oh darling!” Harriet rushed over to him, pretty as ever, kissed him on the cheek and dragged him by his arm. “How I’ve missed you so!” and he knew she meant it.

“Hello my love, and I you.” Percival somehow meant it as well. The house was always dull without Harry’s constant movement.

“Oh Percival, how nice of you to join us. Your father got here before you,” came his mother’s shrill voice. This translated to “I wonder what you were doing that took you so long to get here.”

“Oh Elsa, leave the man alone. He is a hardworking soul.” His father’s commanding voice left no room for any more questions.



Self-portrait / Luka Bilbao



Percival went over and kissed both his mother's and sister's cheeks before sitting down next to Harriet. He never liked the drawing room, it was too bright, and too colorful even at night. All the paintings and the multiple cushions on every couch.

"I was just telling Harriet we are very worried about how she hasn't conceived yet." Suddenly he tensed up.

He could feel Harriet's muscles intensely harden next to him as well. He wanted to wring his mother's neck for deciding to speak upon such a sensitive subject. He could sense Constance's worried glance from his peripheral vision.

"I mean, you have been married for four years now. Percival, you're 26, and Harriet Anne, sweetheart, you're going to be an old woman when your children get married. You're already 22." Harriet was taking shaky breaths. He took her hand and squeezed it. She clutched harder.

"I was thinking maybe we should get Harriet Anne checked out by a doctor. Maybe she's

barren." This made him seethe with anger.

It was not Harriet's fault that he didn't want her that way. The only time they had been intimate was during their wedding night. He had been able to pull it off somehow. Harriet constantly tried later, but he always rejected her making excuses. After a while, she stopped and they never spoke about it. He felt horrible most of the time, but especially when somebody mentioned children. Percival wanted children. He just felt like he wouldn't be able to get the job done. Then he would have to explain why, and how do you tell such a wonderful wife that you could never love her as a woman?

"Mother, nothing is wrong with Harriet. I would have you leave if you disrespect her like this in our home again." He would have loved to capture her expression in a painting, and hang it over the fireplace.

Her jaw dropped; his sister covered her mouth with her hand to keep from laughing, and his father kept a straight face. But, if his father didn't say anything that meant he was in agreement with his son. He looked over at

Harriet and her eyes were filled with tears. Harriet looked really happy that he had defended her. That made him feel worse. She did not expect him to defend her. He wanted to cry too.

"You are right. Harriet, dear, I apologize. Children will come, hopefully." She couldn't have just left it at an apology.

They heard the ringing of the bell. Supper was served.

Percival slowly opened the door to his room on the second story. Quickly glancing to check if anybody was around since it was past midnight. He wanted to see Collin. He walked towards the stairs, passing by Harriet's room when he heard quiet sobs. Her door was slightly cracked open. He could see her sitting on the side of her bed crying. He hesitated for just a second before opening the door fully and closing it behind him. Harriet looked up startled.

"Oh, Percy! I'm sorry if I woke you. I was just remembering Mother, and you know how I get." She was lying and he knew it. If it was any other night, Percival would have left it at that. But

tonight, he was very worried about his wife.

"Harry," he walked over to her and kneeled on the floor in front of her. He grabbed her hands. "Harry, what is wrong?" Harriet was so surprised by this sudden display of affection, he felt ashamed.

"I-I," she sighed and looked at him straight in the eyes with years of rejection, sadness, love, and most of all, understanding. And then he knew. He knew that she knew. He buried his head on her lap and took the deepest breath his lungs had ever taken.

"How long?" he softly asked her, his voice muffled by her nightgown. It felt like a long time before she answered.

"On my seventeenth birthday, you had already started courting me. I wanted to talk with you alone, and I saw you sneak out of the ballroom. So I followed you and I saw you kiss Teddy Harrington." He jerked his head up so fast, it gave him whiplash.

She'd known even before they were married? Even before he told Constance? Even before he met Collin? Suddenly the shame came over him in waves so strong.

He was crying too. Harriet played with his hair as she continued to talk.

"After that, I couldn't help but notice how your eyes would wander towards men. And I knew we were to be married."

Tears fell from her eyes. "I was the happiest girl when I found out you were going to court me. I was happy when I found out the truth about you as well. I was also happy that you've never pretended to be in love with me. I know you appreciate me. I do. Don't feel so bad. But it's just that..." She trailed off, and she looked up at the ceiling.

"It's just that I have always wanted you to be able to confide in me. I love you, Percy, I really do. I don't care about who you sleep with, or who you love. I just want you to talk to me. Trust me." Her words made him sob harder as he buried himself deeper in her lap. She softly ran her fingers through his hair as he wondered what he did to deserve such a wonderful wife. He understood what Constance meant now. Harriet had been so patient with him, and he knew that he could trust her.

"Harry, what are we going

to do about having children?" He said in between shaky breaths.

Percival looked up at his wife's beautiful face. She truly was pretty, and any of her children would have been as well. The thought made him sob harder. He could hear her coaxing him into her bed as she just held him while he cried. He was only crying for her. For the life he was forcing Harriet to lead. He fell asleep in her arms to the sound of her soft *shhhs* and his own voice whispering "I'm sorry" countless times.



America

by Guisell Gomez

Left or right, the blinkers are on
direction based on oppression or solidarity
should we be guided by Rosa Parks's inspirational phenomenon?
or David Duke's ill-tasted nationalistic morality?

red and blue, the colors that bleed freely
by the inhabitants of a country that omits
truth was promised - yet never given away
and to think it all started with the Brits

heat burning away by the sound
of guns that ricochet past your child's sanctuary
while watching the snowflakes' comfort injuries of the *Hunting Ground*
resisting the conservative flames - no separation from the beads of Hail Mary

free they all say but many feel confined
to rusted chains created by forefathers
misinterpreted by greed and mentality that is non-aligned
to the beliefs that were to receive the highest honors

creating a white America that never existed
more like fat America, misogynist America, fascist America
since when did we become blacklisted?
time to book that much-needed enema

hatred never led the way
disintegration happening before our eyes
when will we wake up from this dismay?
injustice increasing, let's act before America dies

Insatiable Soul

by Guisell Gomez

Staring up above me were
her breasts so perfect and delectable
erect nipples made for me

intrinsically entangled in her body

she was the emotion of happiness
completely embodied in a form of a dominant woman
bare and free she smiled at me with eyes so intuitive and expressive

sexually charged dance - this moment had no misery

her womanhood dripped perfectly over mine
switch - savoring her everything, her sex in my mouth
whether it was breakfast or dessert, I was always ready

as nothing is perfect neither were we - her and I

insatiable soul as I am known to be
there was a piece missing or so I thought
yet, there you always were

conspired for me, so I hoped



Conspiracy / Anto Chavez



Good Milk / Rey Jaffet



Fountain of Youth / Rey Jaffet

Haunted / Darin Gonzalez Jimenez



A king fallen from grace. Man turned titan. Light turned dark.
He walks a lonely road with scars as warpaint. He battles to
gain what once made him great, learning from his experiences,
correcting his past mistakes. His days are looming in the
shadows with only his heart lighting the way, believing the
future is at the end. Halting his journey for those in need of
help to build himself for the future. A man can pursue a dream,
but a titan, can make it come true.

Walter Muñoz



Hablar con ella

by Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

Hablar con ella es como hablar conmigo niña.
Es mirarme en un espejo y verme más chica, más morena,
con pelo largo y una sonrisa de oreja a oreja.
Hablar con ella es recordar lo que una vez fui,
lo que ya no soy.

Hablar con ella es entenderla
Reconocer esa duda entre querer ser doctora o maestra.
Hablar con ella es esperar ansiosa por un correo
Que llega cada semana lleno de ilusiones
Hablar con ella es escoger mis palabras cuidadosamente,
porque quiero que me entienda,
pero también que aprenda a esforzarse.
Hablar con ella es sentirme maestra, amiga, hermana y madre,
todo en una.

Hablar con ella es reír,
porque ¿quién no ríe ante sus ocurrencias?
Hablar con ella es conocer un mundo nuevo
Una Nicaragua no contada por los libros
Una Chacraseca no explorada por mis pasos
Hablar con ella no es hablar solo con ella,
Es también hablar con su mama Juana y con sus hermanos.

Hablar con ella es admirarla
Su dulzura, sus ganas de aprender, su persistencia.

Hablar con ella es querer que triunfe
Apostar por sus sueños y ser testigo de su viaje.

Hablar con ella es una aventura

No de las peligrosas,

Ni de las de monstruos que derrotar

Ni de las de princesas que rescatar.

Es de las de encontrarse a uno mismo,

De las que llenan el corazón

De las que te muestran que la felicidad se puede alcanzar

Solo por hablar con ella.

Becoming a Warrior

by Anto Chavez

“What a faggot. He’s crying like a little girl,” Luis said. He made fun of Andres because of his femme voice and the way he walked. Andres walked slowly, moving his hips from right to left with every step, as if he was in sync with some sort of music playing in his head. I thought it looked funny. It seemed as though he had this entire other universe in his mind where he walked on an awards show red carpet all the time. Unfortunately, Luis didn’t. I stayed quiet and listened to what he said. I focused on my homework and never looked up, with the exception of that terrifying moment when I said

“I wish I could walk like that.” Luis looked at me weird but disregarded my comment. I doubt he even heard me; I made sure to speak in the lowest tone possible.

“Faggot!” he screamed again. I knew there was so much wrong in that six letter word. Why use such derogatory remarks? Why was “crying like a

girl” supposed to humiliate him? Unsurprisingly, that was not the worst thing Luis said during lunch. The conversation went on. Luis and his crew verbally destroyed that Andres kid from head to toe. Almost everyone at the table seemed to enjoy the whole bashing and criticizing of this boy who spoke with a really high-pitched tone all the time. I must admit, I didn’t stop Luis either, which makes me just as bad. I suppose I was too scared to confront “my friend” on a matter that did not appear to bother anyone else besides me. After my insignificant comment, I left it alone and ignored the conversation. I was just glad Andres couldn’t hear them.

In the afternoon, my big brother picked me up and the story came up when I started telling him about my day. Actually, when I was forced to tell him about my day.

“Did you play volleyball during lunch again?” he asked smiling, and you could hear the dullness in his voice. He never liked or cared for sports, but I had just joined the team so he wanted to sound interested.

“I didn’t.” I almost whispered, trying to kill the



Existencialismo / Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez



Adrenalized / Rey Jaffet

subject so I did not have to feel guilty while explaining the earlier incident. I was too obvious. Staying quiet was not a good sign. He was one of the few people with whom I was not shy and he knew it.

“But what did you do, monstruo?” I sighed and rolled my eyes at the predictable nickname.

“Some of my friends were bothering another kid because he ‘looked gay,’ if that’s even a thing,” I confessed in a heartbeat, so fast he barely understood me. He became serious, I suppose in an attempt to look for the right words. After a few seconds, my imagination traveled to all the terrible reactions that I thought were underway. Instead, he began the conversation with an unexpectedly patient tone.

“Well, were you bothering him too?” I instantly moved my head side to side in denial. “You should tell them something. I mean, do you actually care if he’s gay or not?” He asked, as if he was trying to know my opinion on the matter. To be honest, I was not like them, but I was 11 years old and the least I wanted to do was fight with my friends. I was immature and careless, so I just replied,

“I am not going to argue

for something that is none of my business.” He immediately became upset and I realized he could not even look at me in the eyes. I noticed he was disappointed by the way he focused on the road and firmly held the steering wheel. He stared at the clock in every red light, desperate to get home. He put the volume up and seemed to be thinking, remembering, and analyzing. I couldn’t figure it out but one thing was for sure, he was not happy with me. My mind began to make me question what had just occurred. Why did he want me to be this perfect person? I repeated the same question in my head until we got home. Was I really the kind girl he thought of me as, or was I just molded to his rules?

The real problem was not standing up to Luis. My issue derived from the fact that my oldest brother was bossing me around. I refused to follow what he said once again. I felt like there were two father figures in my life and I wasn’t sure if that was a good thing anymore. Oftentimes, this overwhelmed me. I was done with my brother crossing the line; like when he convinced my mom to make me turn off my lights and go to sleep when I was a 10-year-old

obsessed with reading the *Harry Potter* series. Or when he forced me to open my Christmas present before Christmas Eve knowing how much I loved surprises. The dilemma: was he crossing the line this time?

I had no idea what I was supposed to do. I was trapped in such a complicated situation, complicated as it can get when you are 11 years old. I was sure he was always going to be my role model, but I didn't want to give in this time. I locked myself in my room and tears rolled down my face because of my frustration. Deep down I knew his point was not to get me upset. I understood what he wanted from me. We went through a lot together, good and bad, and I probably knew him better than I knew myself.

I lived most of my life in a small city and grew up in a house with my mom, my dad, and my two big brothers. He's always been the most protective one. Yes, even more than my dad. My relationship with him is very different from the one I have with my dad, yet I love him with the same strength. He photographed me when I was a little kid, and shaped me into the person I am by acquainting me

controversial topics as much as he could, and taught me math when I had no idea how to multiply.

He would take me to school early in the mornings only to give me thirty-minute talks on how to defend myself and not let anyone take me down. He spent hours trying to explain how much potential I had and how much I could do if I really put my mind to it. He passed by my room every day, refusing to leave until I watched some old TV show with him. Funny enough, that same old TV show would later become one of my favorites. Sure, we might have not had the traditional brother-and-sister relationship because of the age gap, but he was always there for me. Deep down I knew he wanted the best for me. I just didn't quite understand his intentions at the time.

I stayed in my room that afternoon and quietly travelled in my memories. I wanted to remember the good times. A laugh escaped between so much anger when I remembered every time I had to explain he was not my dad when we went out. I would not blame people for thinking it. He is much older than me and treats me like his daughter. Not

to mention, we are practically identical. His friends even called me "the clone." As opposed to my friends, who used to see him as "the cool brother," except, of course, when they asked me why was I so obedient to his advice. That definitely made me question myself. He is not my dad, is he? I don't have to do anything he tells me, I thought. I was struggling between following his "guidance," and trying to be who I wanted to be without restrictions from anyone.

Later that day, he came to my room as usual. He opened his mouth a couple of times and nothing came out, until he finally said,

"I'm gay." I was shocked. I mean, I was completely fine with it, but I was not expecting that. I felt horrible for what happened in that car ride home.

"Look, I only want you to be happy, but I want you to help others be happy too," he explained. I had no clue how I was supposed to fix that mess, so I just waited for him to continue talking.

"I only want the best for you, and part of that is treating everyone with respect and showing acceptance" he insisted. He took a long pause. He looked

at the pictures on my wall, the movies on my shelf, and the books in my opened cabinet until his eyes were back staring at mine and he told me,

"I don't want you to stand up for that kid because your brother is gay, but because you know it is wrong." At that exact moment I understood he did not want to make me another person, he wanted to help me realize being myself was not that awful. He allowed me to be myself and pushed me too. I was able to let people see that having a real personality and being different is not a crime.

There it was, my first identity crisis resolved at the age of 11. That was the day I became an activist, though I didn't quite know what that meant yet. I don't need to be gay to fight against this kind of discrimination. Just by knowing that millions have suffered due to their orientation is enough. No one needs a gay brother to stand up for LGBTQ rights, but it definitely gave me a better understanding of the issue. I realized I was never his clone; on the contrary, he was just shaping the social justice warrior I have become.

¿Adónde ha ido?

by Luis E. Prieto

¿Adónde ha ido, Comandante?

Pregunto yo,

Que soy de los buenos y no sé

Dónde pararán los malos.

¿Estará en el cielo?

O en tigre o león reencarnado.

Pregunto yo, Comandante,

Que soy pionero

De su Revolución de exiliados.

Serán sus campos de nieve,

Serán sus flores raíces,

Tendrá perdón el pecado

De su Revolución de infelices.

No se posan en el balcón las golondrinas,

Ni el ruiseñor canta al alba,

Es testigo el gorrión desde su jaula,

De la diáspora en la cocina.

Duele el rencor de los hijos,

Y la rabia y la traición,

Se han traducido a elegías

Cada poema de amor.

Trabajan los muertos. No vive nadie.

Llega eufórico el llanto hasta los puertos,

Quema el sol las cicatrices,

Se ahogan las madres.

Solo comen los perros,

Corre o se congela la sangre.

Bien conozco esta tierra.

Sé de la pena y la amargura,

Y de salones desiertos,

Y del pasado en ayunas.

¿Adónde ha ido, Comandante?

Pregunto yo, mientras sueño por soñar,

Será este mundo muy justo,

¿O descansará usted en paz?

A una chilena

by Marcel Mazon

Tú te has hecho ya la dueña,
de todos mis afectos,
por tus ojos perfectos,
con tales mi mente sueña.

Tienes a todo mi ser,
cautivado en tu mirada,
que mata como la espada,
a mi tristeza de ayer.

De brillantez sideral,
es tu sonrisa armoniosa,
resplandeciente y hermosa,
es la perla del doral.

Más que el galán de la noche,
más que la jugosa poma,
me ha de seducir tu aroma,
como los brillos de un broche.

Es misterio de la ciencia,
tu mirada acogedora,
que al entorno adulzora,
con su callada presencia.

De admirar es tu perfil,
que es cumbre de perfección,
cual célebre canción,
es el tema de mi atril.

Recuerda al breve arrebol,
tu carita sonrosada,
como una dulce alborada,
traída por la luz del sol.

Déjame ser tu adalid,
y ya verás con certeza,
de este mundo, la belleza,
cual fruto de la vid.

Nunca te daré una flor,
que te hinquen sus espinas,
que dañen tus manos finas,
y que hieran tu candor.

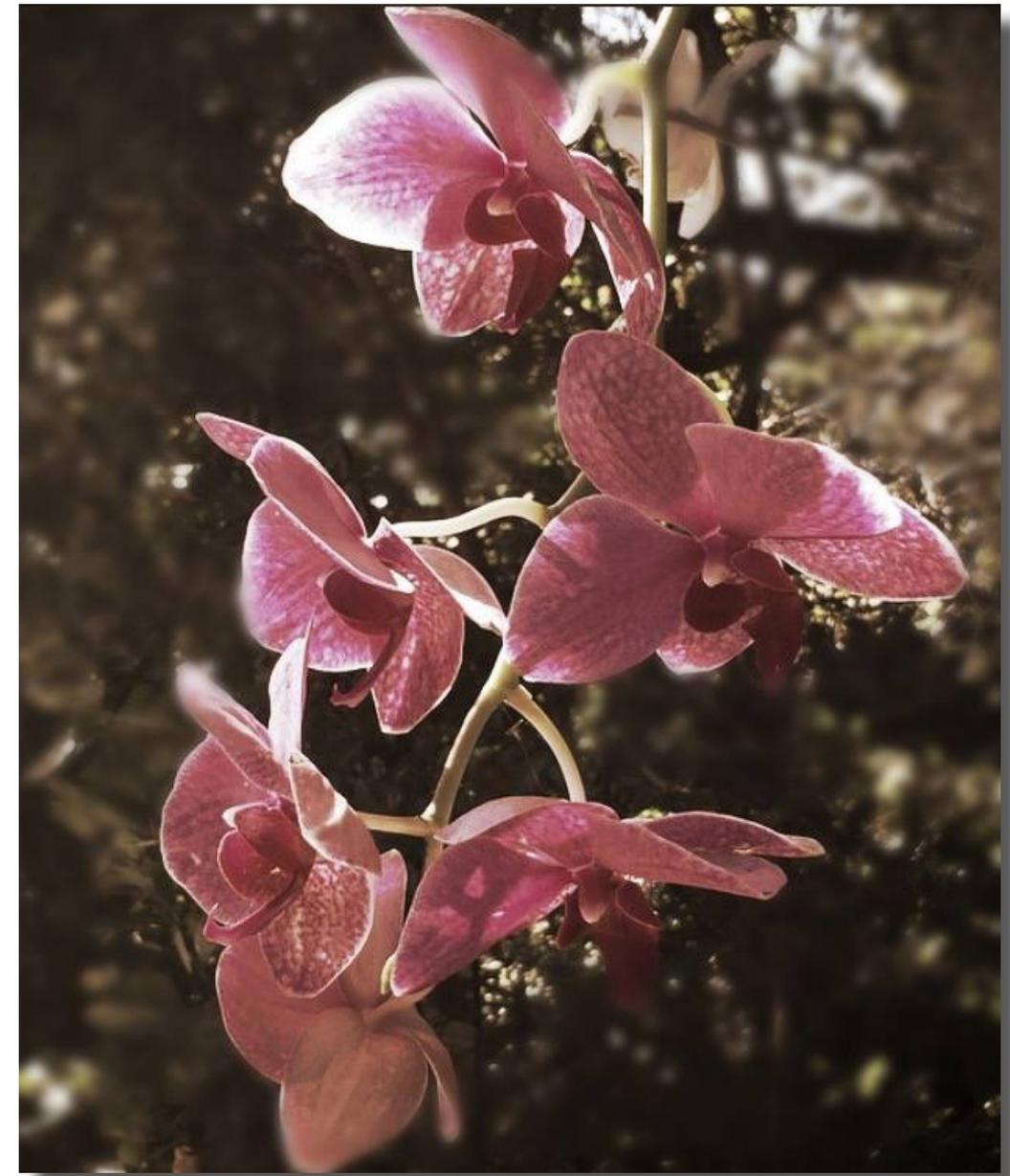
No digas más que eres fea,
bien sabes de tus encantos,
no te hacen falta otros tantos,
todo el mundo te desea.

Mi sencillo y breve verso,
solamente en ti se inspira,
que vuele como la vira,
eres más que el universo.

Como bella obra de arte,
no puedo dejar de mirarte.

Es un inmenso castigo,
partir la vista contigo.

Si tu amor no logro conseguir,
de tristeza tendré que morir.





Hijos del exilio / Anto Chavez

Untitled

by Alberto Silva

I am a tree and my roots are strong.
My skin is fair, but my ancestors come in different hues.
Hair, different textures.
From kinky to straight, from blue to red.
Culture unbeknownst to me,
Empires that ceased to be,
You see,
I know we came from greatness,
And even though the media presents us as brainless,
Our greatness is latent,
We must go back and connect with our Sacred
Roots.



She knows where she is going. She is tripping, she is sliding, but that's okay. The game of life. She has what it takes to play or she doesn't. There comes a moment when is more than just a game. She either takes that step forward, or turns around and walks away. She could quit, but she loves the playing field. She is all about lines. She can waste her life drawing lines or she can live her life crossing them. She must learn for herself, it is not about the race at all. There are no winners or losers. Victories are counted by the number of lives that changed her life. Love was surely made for fools like her. She wishes there were a book for intimacy. A guide that could tell her when she has crossed the line. It would be nice if she could see it coming, but she does not know how to fit it on a map. She takes it where she can get it, and keeps it if she can. She is everything, but nothing. She is anything, but ordinary.

Maria de Lourdes Ramirez

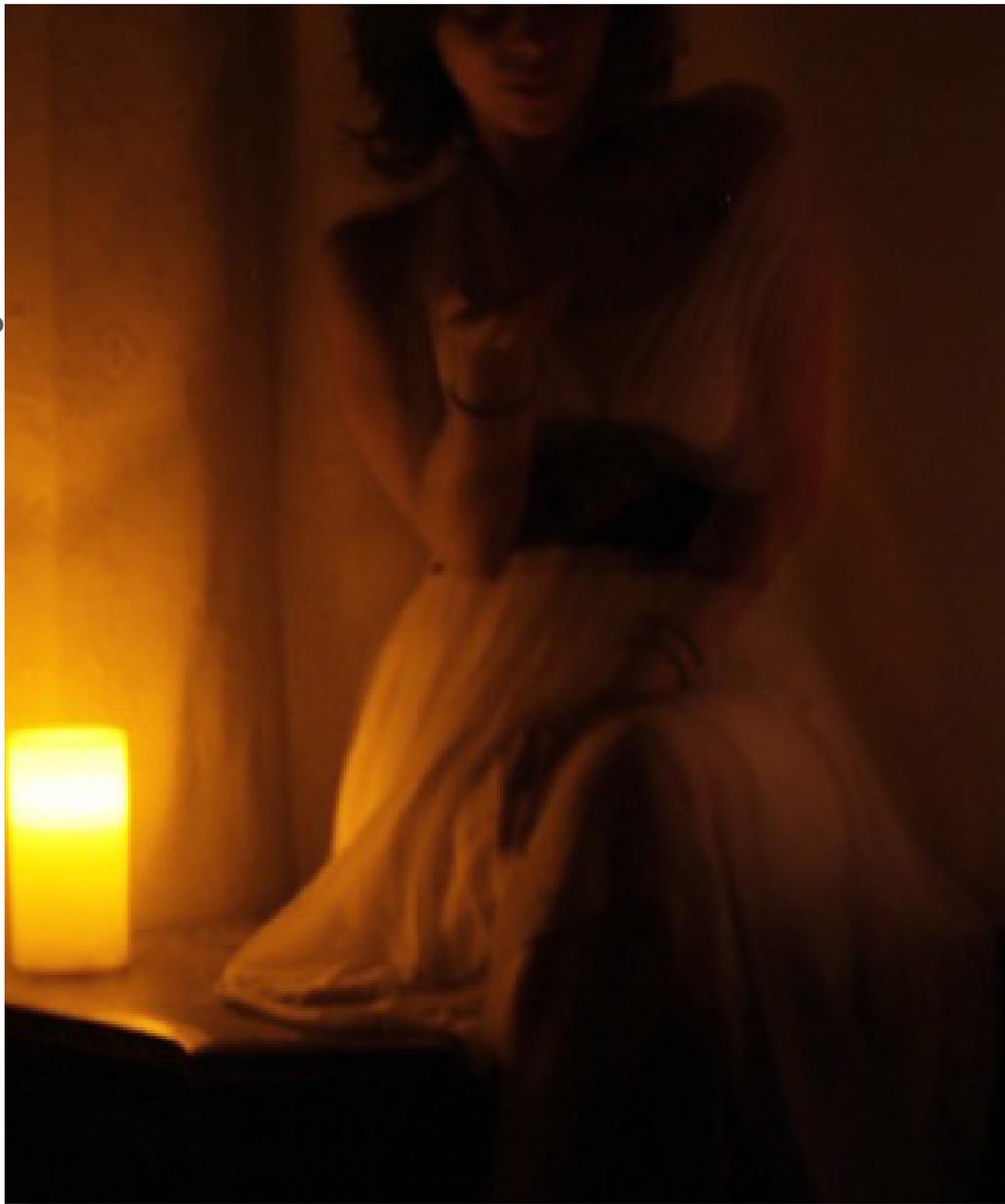
Enlightened / Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

Self-Actualization

by Juan D. Salim

Do you ever look at the stars anymore?
It's like we are all alone
Looking straight ahead at all times
But we never look up anymore.
Imagination no longer comes easily to the mind
Only descending from time to time
Building up on someone else's ideas
This lackluster society has taken hold
Concealing my true desire
Which is unbeknown
I write in agony what little I know
Where were you at times when I needed you most?
Maybe in the future I will hear your echo, but even so
I continue to plead to be your humble host.





Consensually Immoral

by Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

“Do you want this or not?” she said while touching her thick lips with her index finger.

This was the only time I doubted to get into a girl’s legs. It was ironic and almost a cruel joke that my karma had the shape of a woman. I stood at the door, still undecided, feeling that it was a mistake. I allowed myself to be convinced by the sensual swing of her hips as she walked away from me and into her room. I heard the melody of a well-known song I mentioned in one of our several conversations. A song for sex. She turned around, and it was deliberately slow. Her exotic green cat eyes were now playfully staring at me. She was definitely aware of the effect she provoked in me; she watched delighted, as I tried to unsuccessfully hide my erection.

How could I have thought that there was any ounce of innocence in her? I watched her loosen one strap of the white, angelic dress she put on only to confuse me. She was the devil. She stopped for a moment, and I wondered if it was doubt that I saw in her eyes. If it was, it lasted no more than a second. She then let go of the other strap that was keeping the dress from sliding down her body. As if put in a trance, I was finally admiring the view I had longed for.

She was a different kind of sexy, a rare mix between adorable and fierce. At that glorious moment she was all mine, if I wanted, and God forbid, I wanted it. My hands wanted to touch her milky naked skin. My lips wanted to kiss that little mole she had on her neck. My tongue wanted to lick her pink pointed nipples. My body was eager to feel her ass against my-- “Oh, damn it!” I heard myself say hoarsely as I closed the door.

“Is pleasure an intrinsic good? Is acting morally necessary for happiness? Are

all human actions unconsciously and egoistically motivated? Good morning class, my name is Pablo Moreno, and I will be your ethics professor for this semester. Now, remember these questions because you will have to answer them for your final project for this course.”

I carefully scanned the room looking into the eyes of my new students. I prided myself on guessing the essence of each one from the very first class, just by observing them. By the end of the first week, I already knew who was going to fail, who was a shining star, and who was going to accept my extra special assignment to pass the dreaded ethics course.

Two of the eight girls seemed perfect for it. They weren't as beautiful as my last one, Bianca. But then again Bianca was almost perfect, if she hadn't been so dumb. I definitely had my fun fucking her over and over for each assignment she couldn't do. She needed so desperately to pass this class to finally graduate that I didn't even have to make the offer

twice. I think she even fell in love with me, poor innocent girl. She was just like all the others, they needed to learn that life was not fair. After all, I'm a professor, who better than me to teach them that?

One afternoon, during my office hours, this petite girl entered my office. She was part of my class, but she wasn't in my "selected" list for this semester. She looked lovely with those almost unnoticeable small freckles on her face. She had messy wavy hair with bangs and her glasses made her look really cute. Her green eyes, on the contrary, didn't match her sweet, somehow shy personality. There was something mysterious in those eyes, something different, something that got my attention.

"Good afternoon, professor Moreno, can I bother you with some questions?" She asked awkwardly.

"Ah, one of my brightest stars," I replied. "Of course Rebecca, please come in and take a seat."

She sat in front of my desk and started talking about all of



Beyond / Anto Chavez



Inferno / Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

these philosophers, definitions, and hypothetical situations we had discussed in class, while playing nervously with a pen. It was really adorable to listen to her unstoppable and smart arguments. Like I said, one of the brightest. We conversed for about an hour, and she left me quite impressed when she started talking about meta-ethics with mastery. Who would've thought that this small girl almost made me change my mind on an issue I had defended my whole life. A long time had passed, almost 30 years, since the last time I enjoyed someone else's company.

She reminded me of Beatriz, the only woman that had made me feel something more than just physical, primitive, sexual desire. When I met Beatriz, she was my English professor. The first one that made me read and love Shakespeare, Molière, and Oscar Wilde. The one that made me write my first poem, short story, and first play.

She introduced me to theater, ballet, and opera. She

cultivated my already brilliant mind. She knew I was special.

Beatriz was a beautiful woman, short, blonde, blue eyed and with a smile that could light up my whole day. She treated me with so much love that I started to need her in my life at all moments. I started thinking about her, and dreaming about her. I wanted to kiss her lips and touch her hair. I started to get jealous of every other student that would receive her sweet words or made her smile. I carried around a picture of her that I stole from a board. It really hurt me that she treated me like a horny teenager when I finally confessed my love for her. Didn't she understand that she belonged to me, and that we were perfect for each other?

"Are you ok professor?" Rebecca interrupted my thoughts with a worried look in her eyes.

"Oh yeah, sure, what were you telling me?" I promptly replied trying to leave behind my pain.

"I was talking about the question you made in class,

remember? The one about consensual sexual acts being immoral, or if they are outside the realm of ethics.” she said.

“Well, consensual is really the key to that question.” I answered.

When she left my office I took a good look at her small rounded ass. Maybe I should include her in my “selected” list after all, I thought to myself. At least with her I could have interesting talks after I’m finished.

After that day, Rebecca started coming to my office on a regular basis just to discuss concepts and ideas. I was really upset by my childish behavior of rearranging some day’s schedule just to have the time for our meetings. I knew that if I wanted to sleep with her I would have to play it differently because she wasn’t failing the course. On the contrary, she could even give one or two lessons to some of my colleagues. However, I didn’t believe she would’ve accepted trading sex for grades. This time, I had to do it the traditional way. I had to

make her fall in love with me.

The first thing I did was to give her a book that I knew she would love. When she was done reading it, I offered to discuss about it at a coffee shop. She declined the offer, so we actually talked about it at my office. She was harder to persuade than I thought. However, our conversations were shifting from classes and books to more personal talks. She was really curious about my life and really cared about me.

She asked me questions about my apartment, my daily routine after work, and my love life. I wasn’t really used to answering those kinds of questions to anyone before, even though people were always curious about my isolated life.

After two months, we finally started meeting in coffee shops, theaters, and restaurants. She dangerously filled my days, nights and mind. The only space missing was my bed. Rebecca was always worried about someone seeing us, so we decided to have our dates far away from town. She did not

want me to lose my job. After all, She was still my student. It bothered me that she was the one being so secretive about it. I wondered if she was ashamed of people seeing us together. The age gap was obvious at first sight. But why did I care if she wanted to keep it in silence? I wanted to keep it silent. I shook off the question out of my head, afraid to acknowledge the answer.

The long-awaited day finally came. We met at the theater like usual. She was so beautiful that even Aphrodite would’ve been jealous. I was certainly jealous of the white angelic dress that was touching her body. She kissed me on the cheek, but close to the corner of my mouth. I was surprised by her audacity.

However, that wasn’t the only surprise of the night. When we were ready to go in, I saw something I wasn’t expecting, or should I say, someone? Bianca, the last girl I slept with, stared bitterly. I tried to look away and ignore her, but she started walking toward us. She seemed determined and I

couldn’t let that happen. She could’ve messed everything. So I grabbed Rebecca by the hand and we entered the theater. To my relief, Bianca didn’t follow us inside.

While we were leaving the theater Rebecca said,

“I’m taking care of a friend’s apartment tonight. Would you like to take a drink with me?” I automatically replied.

“Of course.” However, for some reason, I couldn’t shake off the feeling in my gut that something was wrong. I thought it was just my coward self finally accepting the stupidity of falling in love with her.

“Pablo Moreno, you are condemned to five years of prison and a \$10,000 fine for the first-degree felony of Lewd and Lascivious Conduct, and upon your release you must register as a sex offender.”

I listened to the judge’s ruling while looking towards Rebecca. She was right there in front of me, more beautiful than ever, with the same white dress

she used that night. I guessed the dress can make any person believe her lies. It did with me, and apparently also with every person inside the trial, including the jury that condemned me. She avoided looking at me in the eyes and I needed her to do it. I needed her to do it because I didn't believe it. I didn't believe everything was just a trap. I couldn't believe she never loved me.

She was looking at Bianca with a triumphal but sad look. I never saw that one coming. Rebecca and Bianca were really close friends. They were the type of friends that tell each other everything, including that your ethics professor made Bianca sleep with him several times to let her pass the class and graduate. Evidently, this whole play was Rebecca's idea because Bianca couldn't have thought of such a brilliant plan to have me incarcerated.

She lied during the trial. Rebecca didn't tell our real story. She played Bianca's part. She said that the sex was consensual but only for the grades. Her act

was so convincing that even I would've believed her. But I knew the truth. And I also knew she loved me despite my crimes. Maybe that's why she couldn't look at me.

Even knowing that I was going to prison because of Rebecca, I couldn't really feel anything but respect and admiration for her.

"I love you." I whispered while walking by her side, handcuffed.





Stripping Labels / Anto Chavez

Never Our Hell

by Guisell Gomez

Imagine she could slip and go
wearing the strength provided by
yells, wails, never our hell

entangled in the delicate webs
of their demands, but
she knows there's more

her resilience is laced in every syllable
she is a Phenomenal Woman
who knows the significance of she-oes
who had the loudest cries
can our progression be louder?

perseverance is seasoned with Austen's
determination to break and tear
a labyrinth that tries to filter your dreams

wrong classification, nightmares
hard-reaching realities except
for those of us who do demolish rules so dated

taking that hot bath seems to
be the solution, a dip with Plath to contemplate
the silent truth many women live in,
can there be a cure for a normalization
we didn't agree to?

voices need to reach over
restrained fibers,
keeping us from

equality



Disintegrating / Anto Chavez

A multi-faceted woman determined to drown in knowledge. She indulges in anything that stimulates her mind even if it seems unrelated to her other interests. She also practices mindfulness in her everyday life which causes her to have a strong sense of empathy. She loves the world and gives it her entire soul. Yet, she won't allow anyone bring down the fences she's put up for herself. She's guarded and feels everyone should be too. Her beliefs strongly state that protecting yourself should be of utmost importance for everyone. To her it is imperative to take care of yourself. She understands that the key in helping others rests in loving yourself first. It's a road that will constantly need tending to but that's part of life. So, love yourself then love the rest.

Guisell Gomez

El gemir de Victoria

by Luis E. Prieto

La noche, tan penumbrosa y alocada, se tapa del frío y escapa a la niebla con un manto de neón. Las estrellas no se asoman, nunca lo hacen. La muchedumbre abarrota los locales revoloteando de bar en bar, de copa en copa, de vicio en vicio. La luna es un astro tan fugaz como la madrugada que comanda: escondida, desenfocada, ni clara, ni llena, ni luna. Estoy yo a punto de finalizar mi rito en el Bar de Buda cuando el reloj marca diez para las cinco y llevo tres tragos de más, dos consejos olvidados, el penúltimo cigarrillo entre el índice y el vulgar. Calada a calada observo lo que me rodea. Bebo para evadir los peligros de pensar. La lucidez es la única que parece acompañarme en estos tiempos de paciencia y asco, como diría Benedetti. Por más que la ignoro, la hija de puta siempre me acompaña.

Es una secta rara la que observo. Si tuviese talento para esto de escribir sacaría mejores novelas que el Quijote y sus molinos y leones. Ni siquiera la imaginación

fuera un factor indispensable, solo el mero esfuerzo de contar tal cual las historias que involuntariamente escucho cuando pretendo no estar presente. Hay que ver lo que cuenta la gente al oído de un extraño: abogados que en otra vida fueron piratas, reyes que por amor sacrificaron todo y ahora tragan cenizas por una copa de ron, talentosas bailarinas que por miedo y adicción solo llegaron a danzar en teatros para *gentlemens* con generoso gabán. En fin, que la creatividad está sobrevalorada. Diariamente la realidad me sorprende con cuentos que oscilan desde morbosos, hasta corruptos. En esta ciudad se vive lo que la gente común presencia en televisión. Yo no. Entre tanto diluvio me limito a seguir con mi vida pegada a la madera áspera del sillón de esta cantina.

Ainoa era la vidilla del bar, un grano de sal a mitad del río. Disponible solamente para el más pirata; era un tesoro y, a su vez, un clavel que se lanzaba al mar en los castigos de carena. Cada noche la extraño tanto como igual deseo que se ahogue en el humo de sus sueños, en la mierda de sus vicios. Que le arranquen la sonrisa perfecta y no sonría si no es a



Untitled / Luka Bilbao



Catch Me / Darlin Gonzalez Jimenez

mi vela. Que se disipe su mirada palpable, promiscua, si no es a mí a quien mira. Ojalá una jugarreta del azar y las putadas le anclen para siempre al taburete desolado de otro local y pase desapercibida, que sufra la pena de ser invisible. Ojalá la nostalgia le azote duro en la memoria, hasta que solo pueda recordarme y llorar, sangrar y seguir llorando.

-Ya casi cierro, jefe. - grita el barman.

Recojo mis pertenencias meticulosamente, no quiero tener que dormir en la escalera: llaves, cartera, cigarrillos, mechero, su foto, todo listo.

No es que ame a Ainoa, pero nunca me he acostumbrado a más compañía que su respirar profundo por la madrugada y sus tentáculos apretando fuerte hasta fundirse en uno.

Salgo y doblo la esquina buscando la ruta de la parada; debo apurarme si pretendo alcanzar el primer autobús del día. Es el único cabrón que no se retrasa; pasados veinte minutos de las 5 de la mañana y está ahí como un clavo. El sol duerme aún en su cuna de mar. Nuestra relación ha mermado en los últimos meses. Solo salgo de día a comprar el pan y regreso a

mi madriguera para esconderme como un ratoncillo roído por los años.

-Psss, pss - siento que me llaman. Miro a todos lados confundido, sin saber de dónde provenía aquel gorjeo. Volteo y distingo a una chica, casi imperceptible en las tinieblas de la lejanía. Destaca su brazo ondeante y centelleante labial. Nunca imaginé el cántico de una sirena con tan desafinadas melodías. Mientras me acerco el misterio aumenta y yo enfoco los detalles. Viste con botas negras, vaqueros, chaqueta. La blusa blanca presume un cálido escote de campeonato. Lleva la cabellera desamarrada, desordenada y roja. Sus ojos son glaciales en un rostro ardiente, como dos cubos de hielo en un whiskey on the rocks. De la muñeca izquierda le cuelga una pulsera verde, muy sencilla. En el cuello luce un lunar y en la mejilla otro; ambos igual de tentadores. Sus rasgos son refinados pero vivos; tiene la nariz respingada, los labios gruesos, seguros, y los cachetes rosados como el color de un recién nacido. A su lado hay un coche azul prusia, tan oscuro que no lo logré distinguir hasta encontrarme apenas a unos metros de distancia.

Ella señala el capó abierto mientras pregunta - ¿me echás una mano? - tenía un acento extranjero que me excitaba profundamente.

Maldita su suerte. Se ha venido a topar con el único hombre en esta ciudad que no sabe diferenciar una bujía de una tuerca. Siempre he deseado una figura paterna presente a la hora de trabajos de “macho,” pero mi intermitente padre nunca me adoctrinó en el arte del bricolaje. Así escogí la pluma de mi madre, que era poeta, y desde que me acuerdo nunca he tocado un martillo ni para jugar.

Me vuelvo a fijar en sus labios, en los dos lunares y distingo un tercero escondido en el abismo de su escote. Reparo en los vaqueros rotos y apretados; tanto que de ser puesta a trasluz observaría cada centímetro de su piel tapada, cada huella de quien antes la hubiese adorado.

Observo el motor del coche detenidamente, sin decir una palabra, con cara de entender todo lo que miro, de saber exactamente dónde encontraré algún desperfecto, pero pensando para mis adentros: ¡qué coño es todo esto! No podrán venir estos

aparatos con un botón que diga “en caso de avería apriete aquí,” y listo.

-¿No será la batería? - digo intentando al menos localizar un cartel con la señal de “BATTERY” para poder mostrársela.

-No, no puede ser, el coche es nuevo. - Mierda, cierto que estos trastes tan modernos tienen mejor tecnología que en la NASA. Hasta ella sabrá que mi veredicto es más que poco probable. Ni modo, no me voy a corregir ahora.

-Es lo único que se me ocurre. Lo demás, parece en buen estado. - sobre todo porque nunca antes había visto tantos cables juntos, tantos tubos y piezas y tornillos y una especie de relojito metálico con el que casi me quemó por andar trasteando. Sabrá Dios en qué película habré escuchado yo la bromita de la batería; porque, además de escribir, soy un cinéfilo apasionado.

Ella está de los nervios; intentando encender el móvil a destajo, sin éxito ninguno.

-¿Tenés celular? - pregunta.

-Tengo un hijo.-

-En tu apartamento, supongo - Se me escapa una sonrisa inocente, igual a la de un niño al que le pillan robando caramelos. Disimulo y callo, un anzuelo

tan desenmascarado no precisa explicaciones. Queda receptiva a mi propuesta, pensante, fría, tan trémula y taciturna que no sabría decir si se lo planteaba o buscaba una piedra para romperla en todo mi descaro.

-Vivo a treinta minutos de aquí. -

-¿En coche?-

-Caminando. ¿Cuál es tu nombre?-

-Victoria, Victoria Palegui-

Victoria se mordisquea los labios de colágeno. Por sequedad o seducción, no lo sé, pero cada vez pienso menos y me excito más. Mira de un lado a otro, analizando mi propuesta o buscándole una alternativa. Consciente soy de que no tiene muchas; puede esperar a que la ciudad despierte, aunque a juzgar por la farra de anoche despertará tarde. Puede prescindir de su chaqueta, agarrar los alicates y suplicar al hada madrina de los motores, tirando por la borda el trabajo de algún artista del manicure y sin muchas probabilidades de resolver nada. O puede, finalmente, confiar en la bondad de los desconocidos, como diría Blanche en “Un tranvía llamado deseo.”

Relámpagos instantáneos

comienzan a estallar en la atmósfera como culebras de luz, lanzándome un guiño de ojos del azar. La brisa que empujaba su perfume ya impregnado en mis pulmones se desespera y sopla fuerte, enérgica, hasta hacer de su aroma todo el aire que respiro. El frío aumenta su furia y se refleja en los pezones de Victoria, ahora erguidos, turgentes.

-Ya va, esperáme - dice Victoria mientras abre la puerta del coche para agarrar su cartera, formando una pequeña L preciosa. Abre la guantera y saca una especie de agenda, la guarda, y vuelve a una posición erecta, tallada, perfecta.

Ella comienza a caminar y yo la sigo. Desconozco cómo conocerá la ruta. Me ha visto venir pero, aun así, los forasteros más arrojados no se lanzarían a liderar paseos por estos callejones de la ciudad. Ella en cambio derrocha confianza al andar, como si una burbuja de lino elegante la rodeara, como si el lino fuera de transparente acero y la volviera intocable. Llegamos a la esquina y se queda inmóvil. Su rostro, ahora vulnerable, voltea. Sus pupilas perdidas e inciertas me miran.

-Por aquí - le indico.

Saco un par de cigarrillos que nos acompañen en la avenida. Busco algún fósforo suelto en mis bolsillos y lo acaricio con agresividad contra el filo de una reja marrón oxidada hasta encender la llama. Lo acerco al cigarro que sujeto en los labios, solo lo suficiente como para sentir el calor en mi rostro y lo zarandeo cuando el rasponazo de humo baja por mi garganta. Paso a ofrecerle el que queda a Victoria, quien me rechaza con un gesto indiferente.

Eran casi las seis cuando llegamos a mi apartamento. La gélida madrugada y los tacones de Victoria nos retrasaron un poco, pero llegamos justo para apreciar los primeros rayos del alba entrar a mi casa por la ventana. Victoria me pidió que le indicara hacia el baño y la escuché soplar la nariz un par de veces. Habrá pillado un resfriado.

Al salir agarra el teléfono de la sala y se pone a llamar como una loca, o al menos eso aparentaba. Mientras, yo entro en mi habitación para liar un porro que me provoque el sueño. Mi cuarto es pequeño; tiene una cama chillona, un sofá calcado a mi columna vertebral, un escritorio donde trabajo y un librero en el que colecciono años de

lectura exhaustiva. Quizás sea mi repertorio de libros de lo único que siento orgullo en mi vida hedionda. La limitada luz que recibe es de una lámpara antigua y despistadas líneas de sol que se cuelan entre las persianas semicerradas.

De un salto me recuesto en el sofá. Victoria entra y se me sienta al lado. No presto atención. Enciendo el hachís liado y lo inhalo dos veces, a lo que le siguen toscas tosidas. La atrevida Victoria me agarra la mano y me roba el canuto. Le da unas caladas y me lo devuelve.

-No contesta ninguno de mis amigos - me dice.

-Te puedes quedar hasta el mediodía- replico.

Entre la risilla tonta y los roces, su mano cae en mi ombligo. El tiempo pasa despacio cuando solo se fuma y se charla. Victoria distingue mi librero y curiosear con la mirada algunos nombres que resaltan. Parece entendida de Borges, enamorada de Neruda y, para variar, puede recitar a Bécquer y sus oscuras golondrinas de memoria. Intenta también con el polvo enamorado de Quevedo pero no le sale. Su obra favorita es *La divina comedia* de Dante. Nunca puse gran empeño a esa lectura,



Vanished / Anto Chavez



pero su entusiasmo al comentarla ha sembrado en mí el deseo que hace mucho no sentía de devorar un libro. En cualquier caso, resulta sorprendente y hasta erótico su afinidad a la poesía.

Victoria comienza a acomodarse. La barrera física se tensa hasta estallar y extinguirse para siempre. Sus labios disolutos se aferran apasionadamente a los míos en un instante de descuido o pura fortuna. Sus senos puntiagudos comienzan a perforar cada poro en mi pecho. Victoria se desnuda en medio de un surtido de besos, mordiscos y cosquilleos. Yo intento hacer lo mismo, pero ella me frena. Me venda los ojos con su blusa y me despoja de prendas lentamente, con interrupciones puntuales de preliminares obscenos. Su boca juguetea en mi cuello, luego en la espalda y sigue revoloteando así como una mariposa impaciente que aletea y reposa y vuela y se vuelve a posar en jazmines distintos. Su cuerpo se retuerce encima de mí. La fantasía es dueña del momento; la imaginación supervisa cada acción instintiva. Siento sus dedos apretando mis hombros y sus piernas destrozando mis rodillas. Visualizo cada detalle de los

juegos de Victoria en mi mente y la curiosidad empieza a picarme. Remuevo el vendaje de mis ojos para plasmar tal escena en mi conciencia cuando las escasas líneas de sol que entran por las persianas entreabiertas rayan el rostro y torso de Victoria. Distingo algo diferente.

Tiene los párpados cerrados. No parece ella. Los labios que ahora me besan son finos, precisos. Una cabellera negra azabache serpentea triunfante y cercena el aire hasta provocarme la asfixia. Unas uñas descuidadas acarician y se encajan en mis costillas. El gemir de Victoria se convierte en un grito de ayuda, en una máquina de hospital. Se abren los ojos de esa muchacha desnuda que miro y una luz verde me estalla en la cara. Solo puedo escuchar un silbido incesante sin saber quien lo emite ni de dónde proviene. Cada vez más fuerte, más cerca... Psssss, pssss, psss

Psss, pss... El autobús hace su parada cuando todavía me encuentro a una cuadra de la estación. Echo a correr. No quiero perderlo.

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Best,

URBANA VIO staff

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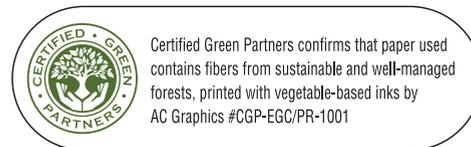
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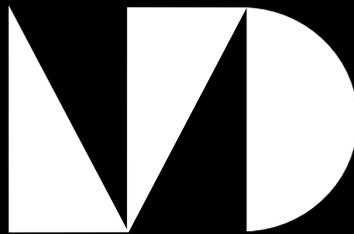
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