

201617 fiction creative nonfiction poetry visual art








mariposa

Estrella Mountain | Literary Review







contents

creative writing contributions

 EVERY WORD HE NEVER SPOKE <i>Makenzie Sparks</i>	4	HOW MALLORY BECAME ZAYN <i>Mallory Gordon</i>	20
 UN SUENO CON MI TIO <i>Yasmin Ruiz</i>	6	IN THE SOUTH <i>Cristina Colon Pizarro</i>	22
 MOTREB SOLDIERS <i>Marissa Figuero</i>	7	JEFFREY AND POOKIE: THE PROFESSIONAL GENIE <i>Guillermo Calvillo</i>	23
 ROCKY MOUNTAIN REMNANT <i>Moriah Giesbrecht</i>	7	MEAT <i>Kenny Meyer</i>	27
 TELEGRAPH <i>Spencer Clark Hall</i>	9	THE BEAST WITHIN <i>Brandon Christopher</i>	27
 MY UNENDING MEDICAL JOURNEY <i>Alexis D. Feldt</i>	10	WHO ARE YOU? <i>Kimberly Cuison</i>	28
 HOW HAVE THE MIGHTY FALLEN <i>Letor Kpee</i>	12	MELANCHOLY <i>Jennifer Kenny</i>	28
ANGST AND TEENAGE STUPIDITY <i>Sara Landess</i>	14	MOONLIGHT BUNNIES <i>Joe Dirt</i>	29
ART <i>Johnathon Green</i>	15	THE OTHER WEXLER SISTER <i>Jennifer Funez-Villalta</i>	33
BURIED ALIVE <i>Sonja Gosnell</i>	16	TO OCCUPY MY MIND <i>Heather Loomis</i>	36
DON'T LIE TO ME <i>Alyssa Guerra</i>	17	UNA NOCHE CON UN VAMPIRO <i>Yasmin Ruiz</i>	36
ANAPHORA POEM: FEAR ITS SELF <i>Cadenn Thiele</i>	19	TIS DEATH THAT LIES <i>Makenzie Sparks</i>	38



visual arts contributions

 WOMAN IN WATER <i>Merritt Zamboni</i>	1	POSTSTORM <i>Alyssa Guerra</i>	20
 MANTICORE <i>Fallon Apodaca</i>	8	THE CORNER <i>Brigidann Minerva</i>	25
 MISS INC. <i>Jennifer Duncan</i>	11	SPACEMAN <i>Fallon Apodaca</i>	29
 UNTITLED <i>John Munson</i>	13	THE KISS <i>Roisin McDermott</i>	31
LOOKING WOLF <i>Carlos Sermeno</i>	15		



featured on the cover

WOMAN IN WATER
first place – visual art
Merritt Zamboni



EVERY WORD HE NEVER SPOKE

first place – fiction

Makenzie Sparks

Lights flashed before my eyes and raised voices pierced my ears. People were running, screaming, as if their inner voices were somehow reflecting off the great agony they were in. Something flew over my head and I ducked, smoothing back my dark, auburn hair where the object almost hit. I felt like screaming too, but couldn't bring myself to conform to what everyone else was doing. Awful music from my left, cuss words to my right, and paper covering the floor. It was a madhouse. It was school.

Teachers and administrators who were *paid* to care stood in every colorless room, always seemingly towering over my small frame and glowering at every one of us like we were *all* hopelessly lost to the ends of time, never to learn an ounce of Algebra, or a smidge of our vocabulary words.

And as it turns out, if you were forced to believe you were going nowhere, that was exactly where you ended up, because we were more influenced by others than our own potential. If anything, I thought the poor teachers were just fed up with missing work, bad grades, and low income. There were some teachers I liked, but it was the very students they were working *for* that ruined them into a wrinkled mess. I felt like that would be me someday, though it would come before I could even finish high school.

I *did* have one friend who lived next door to me, though he was home schooled. I was forced to go to school, molested with germs, while he stayed at home and did his work like a mama's little angel, doing whatever he wanted for the rest of his meaningful day. But he had reason to stay at home.

When I made it home, thanks to the city bus and some change I found at lunch, I went straight to Mikey's house like I did every day. My parents didn't get home until late and I liked it better when I was with a friend than alone in our large house that echoed with every lonely step I took.

I knocked on the red door and stepped inside, not waiting for an invitation, and made my way to the kitchen to say hello to Mrs. G., who was unloading her dish washer.

"Oh hello, Emma. Mikey's in his room. I'll bring you guys a snack later. Sound good?"

"That's great. Thank you, Mrs. G.," I replied.

I made my way down the small hall and through the already opened door to Mikey's room.

He smiled widely and waved, seeming particularly happy to see me today. I smiled back. "Hey. What's up?" I asked.

He shrugged and smiled and shook his head all at the same time.

"So, the same? I have a little homework I have to do, but maybe we can watch a movie or something later? *Jurassic Park* is calling my name." He laughed, though you couldn't hear anything but the breath coming from his mouth. When we were little, we used to pretend we were Lex and Tim, fighting the scream-inducing plastic dinosaurs he collected when he was little.

I joined in his silent laughter and got out my homework from my bag. I sat quietly on his bed while he stayed at his small, wooden desk, writing something down.

Now I know I said the quiet bothered me, but it was different with Mikey. Mikey was my best friend. He was the funny, adventurous boy from next door with the loudest personality I've ever known. And he never had to speak a word. Mute Mikey quite frankly was the only person I enjoyed being around.

When I was finally done with my homework, I looked up to see Mikey watching me, always watching with his green, sparkling eyes and the most conceited smirk I had ever seen on a person. But it was a genuine conceited smirk. He scratched behind his brown, scruffy head and peered at me again from under his flat, yet curly mop of hair.

I smiled back and scooted to the edge of the bed, making my way to his TV and popped in *Jurassic Park* for the gazillionth time that sat on his dresser, always ready to be played. He stood and sat on his bed with me, handing me the paper he was previously writing on. He smiled sadly at me before pinching the sleeve of my royal blue shirt between his fingers and pointing to himself.

"You like my shirt?" I questioned as the previews started in the old VCR player his parents had stuck in his room.

He nodded and pointed to the paper in my hands.

"Okay. I'll read it." I mirrored his smile and laid back on his bed, propping a pillow under my head.

I know it's a little odd to some people that we hung out in his room - my parents almost had a cow since I was sixteen and Mikey seventeen - but Mikey and I have been absolute best friends since we were babies, and nothing could break that. Not gender nor any differences that have grown since our early dinosaur endeavors.

Even when he turned his attention to the movie, he didn't seem focused on Lex or Tim. His face gave



way a nervous skepticism that I only assumed was whatever he had written on the paper in my hands. I glazed over his neat, precise hand writing that always seemed to have a little femininity in the curves of the letters. I had made fun of him once before, but now I saw it as having character. If handwriting said anything about anybody, Mikey's half-cursive-half-print writing said everything about him - how the words curved like music when they danced on the page, or how he connected certain letters, but left others separate. It was like its own language. I always wished my writing was as interesting as his, but I don't think anyone would have noticed it anyway.

When I finally moved my eyes to the first word on the page, Mrs. G. barged in with finger sandwiches and a bowl of grapes. She smiled at us as she set the platter in between us on the bed as I sat up to eat. Mikey put his hand to his chin and brought it forward until his fingers were all pointing to his mom, signing a thank you then leaned back to lay down. I only knew the basic signs of ASL, but Mikey and I could practically read each other's minds, so we relied on gestures and facial expressions.

I thanked Mrs. G. as well and turned back to the paper, eating one of the turkey sandwiches in the process, and listening to her quiet retreating footsteps as she left for the laundry room. It didn't escape my notice that Mikey never made eye contact with me.

I started reading:

'Em,

Before you jump to conclusions and tell me I'm stupid or crazy or whatever (and yes, I know you're joking), I want to get all I have to say out there and in the open. So, don't stop reading to yell at me or hug me or tease me or whatever you will have going through your mind right now. OK. So here it goes.

You are the most defiantly obnoxious person I have ever met. And you don't even know it. You are the only person in the world who can be cocky and funny, but shy and humble all at the same time. When we were kids, it confused the hell out of me. But now, I enjoy nothing more than to watch you tease me, even more than I love watching our infamous comedy, *Jurassic Park*.

And Em, Emma, you kept doing that to me every day since you could talk and I learned to listen to it. You have been driving me crazy. And I mean that in the best way possible. The thing is, you are my best friend. And there is no way in hell I would change that, but at the same time, I don't know how much longer I can take it.

Stop reading if you don't like where this is going. Please. I'm almost begging you to stop. I need to get it out in the open, but if you don't want to hear it, then don't continue.'

I didn't hesitate.

'I love you, Emma. I have loved you since I was five. And before you remark about how stupid that makes me sound since you are like the only real person I talk to (parents don't count), you are the only one who was brave enough to be friends with someone who can't even talk to them. I don't deserve you, Em. You are smart and beautiful and you are gonna do great things someday. I would love to be a part of that-of your life. I'll be graduating this year, as you know, but I want to wait until you graduate next year so we can go to college together. Anywhere you want. I'll be there.

And by damn it Em, if you'll make me chase you, I will. But if you don't want this, I want us to go back to the way we are now. The Jurassic Loving Duo! with no recollection of this dumb letter, okay? Just don't leave me, Em. Don't ever do that to me. And be honest, please...'

I didn't notice my half-eaten sandwich laying on the bed or that the movie was paused or that tears were running down my face, one after another, as if they were trying to beat each other to some finish line. I looked over at Mikey. He was staring at me again, but his cocky grin had somewhere along the way abandoned all cockiness and left only that genuine admiration in it. He looked at me, expecting me to reply to his confession.

Eventually, he reached up and wiped one of my tears away with his thumb and tried to smile, but it looked too sad to be encouraging. I wanted to tell him that I loved him too. I wanted to tell him that he had always been someone I loved. But I knew that wasn't what he wanted to hear. He wanted me to tell him he was the *only* one I ever loved, and will ever love. He wanted to know my crying was from shock and happiness, not from fear and doubt.

I was not going to lie and say I didn't love Mikey the way he wrote about me. I did. But that wasn't the point. I was afraid that if something happened, it would ruin our friendship and I wouldn't be able to talk to him and listen to the words he never spoke. I wanted him all to myself but was afraid that if he was all mine, he would grow tired of me.

After my tears dissipated, I finally mustered up the courage to speak to the most patient, kind, boyish guy I would ever meet. "You said you weren't worthy of me. You are a terrible liar," I started in a whisper and tried to laugh to lighten the mood, but failed. "You are the most incredible person I have ever met. I am not worthy of you. Look, Mikey, I want this just as much as you do but it just isn't possible. I mean, aren't you afraid of things being different? I don't want to be the person who drags you down, and I want

to always talk to you about everything, I don't want that to change." I looked over at him, afraid of what I would find staring back at me, but he surprised me, looking down at my small, insignificant person, shaking his head and smiling.

He mouthed the words slowly so they came out in a small whisper so I could understand. "Nothing will change. I love you. I always have. Just yes or no. Do you love me too?" So blunt. So Mikey.

But I couldn't even bring myself to words, and I felt the tears threatening to return. And I didn't know why, but I suddenly wasn't afraid anymore. It hit me that *he* was what mattered. He loved me and I knew without a doubt Mikey was it. And to think, Mikey was the one laying his heart on the line and *I* was scared.

So, I nodded, still unable to have a coherent word to form in my mouth.

He gave me a huge smile and leaned down in front of my face, took my cheeks in his hands and kissed me.

It didn't matter that the earth was round or that the lives in it were constantly crashing within their own entities. What mattered was the idea of whatever we wanted *our* lives to be. What mattered was every word he never spoke. ■ ■ ■

UN SUENO CON MI TIO

first place – nonfiction

Yasmin Ruiz

I held a skeeball in my hand, I focused my eyes on the upscale railing of the game, I saw the 100-point pots on the left and right corners of the caged machine. I gripped my fingers around the heavy ball, tossed it and watched it role upward, hitting the top up the cage and jolt straight into the left 100-point pot. I grabbed another ball tossed it and watched it jolt into the right 100-point pot. My cheeks and the tip of my nose were kissed by the salt-tinged, cold breeze of the pier.

"Ya sabía que te iba a encontrar aquí, siempre te gustaba este juego," he said. "I knew I was going to find you here, you always liked this game." My tío stepped to my right side. I saw him the way I always wanted to remember him - a chubby man with his thick old man frames, hair black greying hair combed to his left, wearing a short-sleeved light tan button up with shorts and Jesus-Christ-style sandals.

"Sabía que estaba sonado cuándo no sentía tu cunada juzgándome," I said. "I knew I was dreaming, when I didn't feel the presence of your sister in law judging me." I smiled, jerking quickly to hug him, feeling his warmth.

"Catorce anos después, y aquí todavía viene siendo el momento más feliz," he said. "Fourteen years later and this still is your happy place." He held onto me tight.

"Nunca ha regresado aquí de ese día, ni se dónde queda.," I said. "I haven't been back here since that day, I'm not even sure where this place is."

He handed me a brown greased stained bag, "Te traje algo," he said. "I brought you something."

I opened the bag and pulled out a half of a grilled ham and cheese sandwich, and sat on the black ramp of the machine. Giving my tío the other half, he sat on the machine ramp next to me.

"Te dolió, cuándo paso?" I asked. "Did it hurt when it happened?"

He took a bite of the sándwich. "No. fue tan instante, que en un momento iba a trabajar, y en otro tu Tía me estaba esperando para llevarme. Pero siempre estaba ahí, en los días que te perdiste con el licor, el día que cumpliste los diecinueve y veinte años, los días que lloraste yo fui quien te mando una sonrisa y una risa, y siempre voy estar ahí," he said "No. It happened instantly, at one moment I was going to work and the next your aunt was waiting to take me. But I've always been there, like the days when you would lose yourself to drinking, when you turned nineteen and twenty, I was the one who would send you laughter and smiles when you would cry, and I'm always going to be there."

I felt the warmth of my tears streaming down my cheeks as I finished the last bit of my sandwich. "Gracias," I said, "thank you."

He kissed my forehead, "Ya me tengo que ir, pero hazme un favor, haz lo que te hace más feliz, y te miro en otro sueño hija, y me cuentas todo," he said. "I have to go, but do me a favor, do what makes you happy darling and you can tell me about it another dream." ■ ■ ■



MOTREB SOLDIERS

first place – poetry

Marissa Figuero

This culture is like frosting,
It sticks to you and leaves a residue,
Theirs taste like cardamom, dried limes, and sumac,
Ours is like gun powder

What's the point of Halal,
When it's just suffocating its people?
Like cling wrap shoved down their throats

Let mujawwad¹ music fall down like acid rain,
For some people screaming equals Satan
But for others it's just them trying
to drown out the suicide songs

Why does it feel like
This dastagah² doesn't have enough notes
To show people's fear
Foreign laws are as real as my respect for fascists
The government plays us like a santour³
Each shot another note
Each bomb another strum
What a beautiful sound war makes ■■■

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REMNANT

second place – nonfiction

Moriah Giesbrecht

I watched my mom try to brush her unruly curly hair out of her face as she talked, “And there were trees! Pines, aspens, cedars. They were beautiful and tall... and everywhere. Remember when we had picnics?”

For a moment, I was transported back to Colorado. I remember running around a meadow at Silver Jack Reservoir near Ridgeway Colorado. I was six and I was picking a bunch of yellow daisies and stepping on the rest with my sister. “I bet I can get more than you!” I yelled at my sister. It was always a competition. She did not respond, but I could see she was moving faster than before. We were both wearing the same red shirt and striped pants; our parents liked to dress us up as if we were twins. This always annoyed me. The red stood out between the greens of the meadow, so it's more likely my parents just didn't want to lose us.

“Sherah, Moriah!” Mom called, “help us get ready for lunch!” We ran towards her voice and found Dad in the middle of the field unfolding the green camping table. My brother, Jon, was trying to help as best he could with his small body. He was wearing a blue and grey striped shirt and jeans with holes in them; I noted he wasn't wearing any red.

We dined in the middle of the meadow, surrounded by mountains. I couldn't help but look up and feel incredibly small, a feeling I never really liked. After lunch, we walked along a trail in-between a forest of tall pine trees. They towered above me, and I found myself wondering. My dad was holding my hand as he walked beside me and I stomped on the pine needles that had fallen. “Why do the pine needles fall off?” I asked my dad. He was about to respond when my mom called from the other side of the meadow. “Picture time!”

The sun was now in the perfect position as my mom herded us together. She grabbed my shoulders and moved me to the left and then a little back. Sherah stood beside me, and my brother beside her, while my mom found her place behind us. Dad set up the camera and said, “Ok, it's going!” He clicked the camera button and quickly ran beside mom. A red light blinked on the camera and I counted along with the blinks

¹Mujawwad: emotional, melodically complex

²Dastagah: a scale used in the Middle East for music

³Santour: Persian hammer dulcimer

in my head... 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Click!

From a pile of old photos, mom pulled out the picture from that day. She looked at it while reminiscing. She was quiet, but I knew what she was thinking. She wanted to go back, she was happy in Colorado and she was not happy now.

Arizona is the reason she was unhappy.

Arizona was the reason she would lay on the couch incessantly, coming in and out of sleep. Arizona was the reason she wouldn't cook dinner or wash clothes. Arizona was the reason she stared at pictures of Colorado all day, instead of cleaning the house. Arizona was the reason she was no longer a mother.

I was nine years old, in 2006, when I was assuming my mother's thoughts. I had no idea what "depression" was, or what it could do to a person and I imagine that, even if I knew, I wouldn't care. Conversations



MANTICORE

second place – visual art

Fallon Apodaca

MY UNENDING MEDICAL JOURNEY

third place – nonfiction

Alexis D. Feldt



One August night in 2010, I was awakened by a throbbing pain in my legs. A typical response, I got up out of bed and proceeded to the restroom. I jumbled through the medicine cabinet until I came upon the ibuprofen. After taking those three small round orange pills I glanced up in the mirror and began to realize something was wrong. My reflection was slowly being engulfed in this grainy black mist, it started at the outer edges and was creeping its way towards the center; getting darker with every move. Along with my vision, my hearing went as well, the terrifying sound of underwater silence was all that was there. My mouth couldn't form a single word, but my body managed to open the restroom door, I could hardly see the hallway just ahead of me; and then, there was nothing. Blackness had entirely taken over, there was no sound, no smell, no taste, no feeling of anything. What just happened?

Then abruptly I heard my name being called, it was my mother's voice. Progressively, the dark began to clear and I could see the dim yellow light emanating from the restroom, and I saw my mother's terror and her worry-stricken face above me. It took me a few seconds to register that I was now lying on the dingy beige carpet just outside of the restroom, wondering why am I on the floor. How did I end up on the floor? I felt weak and slightly sweaty, I began to respond to my mom with multiple "yes's." I proceed to get up to my feet ignoring the extreme feeling of being lightheaded. This action proved to be a poor decision, nearly as quick as I had gotten up, the blackness swooped in and took all consciousness from me and once again I was on the same dingy beige carpet. The second time I resurfaced, I could hear both my mom and dad talking in a low muttered panicked tone, I met the gaze of my bearded and tired eyed dad; he helped sit me up against the flat white wall that was stationed right next to the restroom door. I was even more weak and deluded this time that I could hardly even hear the conversation my parents were having right next to me about whether to call an ambulance or drive me to the hospital. The executive decision was made. After sitting on the floor with my dad for about five minutes I decided I was well enough to get up and proceed to the car and head towards the hospital. Little did we know that this was just the beginning of many more episodes to come.

The following years leading up to 2014 were a mixture of chaotic, fretful and difficult emotions. Only one other time required a hospital visit, by ambulance. During that episode, I was gasping for air and was unable to fully recover after resurfacing. After this incident, episodes of unconsciousness became almost routine for my mother and me. Once I could distinguish the beginning signs of an episode, it allowed me to cognitively group myself together enough to holler for my mother and slide down the wall until I was in a sitting position on the floor. Due to the lack of health insurance, we did not know precisely what my condition was, so we had to adapt and invent quick solutions on our own. Through many trials, we found that a damp cold rag placed around my neck and one placed on my chest helped best when recovering from an episode. These episodes can differentiate in severity, after blacking out I could either reawake and the side effects be minimal or they could be more severe. I would be covered in sweat, too weak to move at all, and have a migraine headache for a whole day or two, along with extreme exhaustion.

In 2014, things began to drastically change. We finally got health insurance, which meant we could finally go to the doctor to diagnose this issue. The first of many steps in this diagnosis journey began at establishing a primary doctor. After the long and dismal process of filling out the paperwork and waiting for the doctor, she had finally entered the room. This tall, pale, lean woman with dark hair and black glasses sat on her stool writing down all the information I fed to her. She finally looked up at me, astonished that I had experienced so much at such a young age. Immediately she ordered bloodwork to be done; mostly to rule out Lupus which is a dreadful disease that runs in my lineage. When the results came back positive for Lupus, I was referred out to a rheumatologist. Once I arrived at the rheumatologist's office, I had another very long and dismal wait until I was finally greeted by the doctor and his intern. The young intern stood behind the tall, also skeleton-like doctor with the fun, bright glasses, silently taking notes while I was examined and my bloodwork was looked over. Following the short and uncomfortable exam of poking, prodding and reviewing my bloodwork findings, it was concluded that I did not have Lupus. However, I did have Fibromyalgia; a nerve disease that causes indirect pain without cause. Nervous from that I was sent out for blood work and was referred over to a neurologist.

As we were trying to find a neurologist in our insurance, our insurance abruptly changed. Just another day in the chaotic mess of what is my life. We were set back to almost square one. We had to find a new



MISS INC.
third place – visual art
Jennifer Duncan

primary doctor. Once the new primary doctor was sufficiently up to date on my situation I was, once again, referred over to a neurologist. The peculiar thing about this particular neurologist's office was that even though I was 17/18 at the time, I was categorized as a pediatric patient until the age of 21. The small yellow room I was placed into was fully decorated in children décor as Mickey Mouse and his friends were happily placed on the wall across from the short medical bench that was draped in cartoon circus animal sanitary paper in which I was seated on. This short, plump, happy Asian woman came into the room and introduced herself as Dr. Melanie Alarcio. Thereafter following that appointment Dr. Alarcio became my primary doctor. I went to see her about every month to every other month. During my treatments with her I gave enough blood to sufficiently sustain a small child; each time I went in for bloodwork I would have to generate up to ten or twelve vials. Among the ghastly amount of bloodwork that was conducted, I was also subjected to many other tests to try and find answers. Some of the test included: MRI, EKG, EEG, Overnight Sleep Study (Polysomnogram), Multiple Sleep Latency testing, Table Tilt Test, and a DNA swab. Unfortunately, these tests still did not find the ultimate cause of the episodes; however, it did find the answers to some smaller complications. My official diagnoses include: Narcolepsy, Chronic migraines, Fibromyalgia, DNA mutation of L-5 MTHF, iron deficiency and potential of seizures or syncope.

Dr. Alarcio has helped me tremendously through a naturopathic and medication basis. Due to my chronic pain and the potential of seizures, Dr. Alarcio prescribed me a nerve pain stimulator and seizure medication (Gabapentin), and along with plenty of vitamins. I feel well-improved. It has been about a year since my last episode, and needless to say, life is much better without them. Even though I am still not at 100% in regard to my health, I have managed to live life how I chose to and I will continue to work towards my goals in my own adaptation to this life. ■■■

HOW HAVE THE MIGHTY FALLEN

third place – poetry

Letor Kpee



HOW HAVE THE MIGHTY FALLEN

Oh, how have the mighty fallen?

The beauty of America is slain upon the high places,

How have the mighty fallen?

And the human weapons of war perished.

Tell it not in Mississippi, publish it not in the streets of Alabama,

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,

Lest the enemy of America triumph.

Oh America, you were lovely and pleasant

You were swifter than eagles,

You were stronger than lions,

Oh..., you daughters of Nations,

Weep over America, who clothed you in scarlet,

Who put ornaments of gold upon your garments,

How have the mighty fallen?

In the midst of the battle,

I am distressed for thee, my nation,

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me,

Thy love to me was wonderful,

Passing the love of women,

America a great Nation, but

How have the mighty fallen?

America a hope of the world,

How have the mighty fallen?

America the pillar of the world,

How have the mighty fallen?

And the whole world has scrambled.

America was like a mother,
Who spread her wings to cover her children,
The mother of the whole world,
Who provided for so many Nations,
How have you fallen?

There's a horrible cry,
Fear of terror on every side,
People seek for asylum,
We are back in '30s,
When the African Americans were like slaves,
When the white claim to be superior over them,
When there wasn't any right for the Blacks.

O people let us cry unto God,
I can't stand the pressure much longer
Can't you see it?
Can't you feel it?
It's all in the air.

You don't have to live next to me,
Just give me my right,
Don't separate me from my children,
We were sold as slaves,
I've been a refugee seeking for asylum,
Now where shall we go?

Please let somebody say a prayer
The executive order is hurting many people,
All across America,
Families are being separated,
People are stranded overseas,
There's a growing fear.

The U.S. is no longer a place that welcomes immigrants
People are banned
What a terrible world
How have the mighty fallen?
Please let somebody help build my inner walls,
For I'm seeking for
Inner security ■ ■ ■



UNTITLED

honorable mention – visual art

John Munson

ANGST AND TEENAGE STUPIDITY

Sara Landess

I had been cutting for about a week using a pencil sharpener blade. I was in seventh grade, attending Sun Valley Elementary school. The desert beige building was bleak and boring, the only color was the mustard yellow and harsh red of our school colors. My best friend Layla saw the small, thin cuts on my arm.

"They're cat scratches," I said, trying to play it off.

"No they're not."

She went to our English teacher, Mrs. Ruslan. She was a petite woman, no more than five feet two inches with dirty blonde hair cut short, and she always wore slacks and cardigans. She had been one of my favorite teachers, her and her husband, a tall man with thinning hair and a meter stick, who was my math teacher. When Mrs. Ruslan found out I was cutting she sent my class to her husband's room so she could talk to me alone. I sat down in one of the small, hard plastic desks; the metal legs sending chills down my spine. She sat down in a chair across from me, I couldn't meet her gaze, I knew exactly why I was here. I glanced around the room, the off-white walls were decorated with posters, all grammar- and English-based.

"I know you're cutting, I'd like to know why, maybe I can help?" she asked calmly. I didn't know what to say. I had a good life. My parents were still together and financially stable. I had pets, good friends, book, toys, and clothes; I got whatever I wanted. I had no reason to be so angry and depressed, but I was. I felt that void in my chest every day, that void that made me feel empty and alone. It felt like getting punched in the stomach and having the wind knocked out of me every second of every day.

"I don't know." I shrugged. She didn't look angry or annoyed at my response or lack thereof, she simply stood from her seat, walked over to her desk and pulled out a spiral notebook. It was dark purple, the corners were torn, and half of the pages were missing.

"Another student of mine was cutting as well. I gave her this notebook to write in when she felt like cutting. She gave it back to me when she stopped. I want you to have it, write in it whenever you feel like cutting. You can write your feelings, whatever is upsetting you, a story even. Just write in this instead of cutting."

I wrote in the notebook every day and, for a while, it worked. I would write stories mostly, they always ended happy with a knight in shining armor who would save the girl and they'd live happily ever after. My parents also put me in therapy. The therapist was an older man, with white balding hair and was a little on the bigger side. I didn't open up to him that much. We talked about my friends, school, family, and every so often he'd have me take a random test to see if I was crazy or not. Eventually, he wrote me off as an idiot kid with impulse control issues and claimed I was cured. For a few months, I was. All throughout seventh grade and summer I was fine. I had no issues and barely even thought about cutting. Then eighth grade started and I got stressed out and that little voice in the back of my head told me that cutting would help, so I started cutting again. This time I was smarter, I would cut my hips instead. I kept it up until April of my freshman year. The week of Easter I had an appendectomy, resulting in two small incisions on my hips, right where the cuts from the week before had just healed. I almost got caught again. This scared me enough to stop for about two years. In this time, I joined the swim team and started writing; the combination seemed to help. Again, it was only temporary.

I started back up in my junior year of high school. The death of my family dog Callie Mae, was a partial trigger for my continued habit. That and that stupid void that was still there. But mostly it was stress that caused me to start up again. I was a stupid teenager and boys were the center of my attention. I, however, was not the center of theirs. My self-esteem plummeted and my choice of friends did not help either. My "best friend" Vanessa, was the "it" girl and I was just her messenger. She's was gorgeous polish girl, fluent in both English and Polish, she had naturally blonde hair but dyed it dark brown, and she had blue/green eyes. Not to mention she'd sleep with any guy who bought her coffee or something shiny, like a sluty raccoon. Any guy I wanted, she'd snake from me, either that or they wanted her from the start. I was cutting my hips again, keeping it hidden as I was still on the swim team. Cutting for me at that time helped me breathe, like a cigarette to a smoker, and I kept cutting until June my senior year.

A few weeks before graduation, Vanessa decided she didn't need me anymore, so she spread a rumor around our shared group of friends that I had been fooling around with her boyfriend. They iced me out. Only one stuck by my side, Layla, the girl who had been by my side throughout everything. Of course, I didn't think about it at that time, I was too busy wallowing in self-pity to focus on the fact that I still had an amazing best friend and I was now free of a soul sucking leech. So, instead, I allowed the thoughts of self-harm and suicide consume my mind until it was all I could think about, until it was all consuming.



I did finally start to feel better, my rescue dog Athena helped, my mother found her on a rescue site, Arizona Golden and Giant Breed Rescue. As soon as we all met her we fell in love with her, she was a birthday present for my mom. We adopted her in late June of 2014. She was a black lab with light brown eyes, her bottom eyelids droop slightly causing her to look like she's always pouting. She has a big square head, with big paws and short legs. She was left by her previous owners tied to a fence, as a result she has separation anxiety. She slept on my bed with me at night and after I would cut, she would lay her head on my hip for the rest of the night, her attempt to make me feel better. Anytime I thought about committing suicide, I would think about how she wouldn't know or understand why she no longer gets to sleep in my room, why she doesn't get a blanket when it's cold, why she doesn't get to snuggle at night, and I decide to hang on for another day, for Athena and me. ■ ■ ■

ART

Johnathon Green

ART

So many places
Angels and Spaces
I have a vision of you
Heaven is far off
I stare casually at a picture frame of
You
When you're outside in the rain
you drink water from the sky
For what it's worth I
Become cumulus
Reason unfiltered like the flow that caught
You
Chemical reactions
Syncing equations
Numbers become the path back to you

No you just can't go to sleep
Cause you are living in a dream

Your skin is on the outside
Which is where all our souls live
While were losing our minds
In the wave of populous
You're a breathing ember
Catching a ride on fleeting heat
Beneath every fire
Are the coals that cause burning
When the sun comes up
I'll stare at that dying star
Because you are no song
You are just a work of art ■ ■ ■



LOOKING WOLF

Carlos Sermeno

BURIED ALIVE

Sonja Gosnell



What comes to your mind when you think of dirt? Do you imagine a nuisance, a plague that offers little more than aggravation? Or do you find yourself visiting your childhood, creating mud-castles and enjoying the small things in life? Perhaps you think of its usefulness, providing vital nutrients for budding flowers so that they might bloom.

What comes to my mind when I think of dirt? I want to imagine its warmth, this dark rich powder that provides comfort and room to grow. I want to relive all the *wars* my brother and I had; how we would fling mud at each other until our clothes were beyond saving. Our mom would spray my brother and I with the hose before she let us back inside. I want to think of the worm farm I had in fourth grade. It was a 2-liter Coca Cola bottle, packed with rich soil and several worms. I took such good care of my *pets* in the dirt. I even saw a worm hatch from an egg, beginning its life in that brown mess.

But these are not the first memories that come to my mind when I think of dirt. But God, I wish I they were.

Instead, I think of Arizona's *beauty*; this god-forsaken desert that stole my life, my family: everything I held dear in Aurora, Illinois. I was sixteen and I was trapped in a 2008 Volkswagen Jetta with my mom, step-dad, brother, dog, and leopard gecko. I was stuck behind my step-dad (a 6'4" Master Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force) and beside my brother (a 6'3" dork with no sense of personal space). On my lap laid my dog, Maya, who was drugged (thankfully) because of her car anxiety. Oh, did I mention that I am claustrophobic?

For two days and approximately 1800 miles, I was stuck in that car driving from Illinois to this damn desert. On the way, we pulled into the "Bates Motel." I stepped out of the car and was cat-called by raunchy truckers. I cringed as they yelled "Hey sexy" and "We'll show you a good time;" their words made me sick. I cursed as they dropped empty beer cans at my feet and retreated to the *safety* of the room. The furniture was mismatched and "Death to America" stained the walls in thick, black ink. It was midnight when my dog whined again, forcing me to leave the *safety* of the room. As I walked, I prayed that a trucker wouldn't get cocky and try something. They were still outside their room, drinking and laughing. They yelled "Hey baby" to get my attention and I ignored them. My heart pounded in my chest but the truckers kept their distance. I slipped into the room and locked the door of the "Bates Motel."

I laid on the rickety bed in a hoodie, jeans, socks, and shoes. I was not going to let any part of my skin touch the filthy room. My brother laid next to me, on his phone. A metal hanger twisted into a shank laid beside him. My dog laid her head on my chest and slept. My mom took a sleeping pill, but even that couldn't knock her out. My step-dad sat by the door, waiting for a murderer to walk in.

I missed my home already. I missed my friends. And most of all, I missed my grandparents. None of this I could share; it was my job to be the enthusiastic daughter, happy for her newly remarried mom. Even if this was only the, what was it, third time I'd met my step-dad.

We were back in the car before the sun had risen. It was 4 o'clock in the morning and I was exhausted. I felt carsick and claustrophobic, but I refused to look out the window at the stupid dirt. Where were the dusting sand dunes and the towering cacti? We approached Arizona through New Mexico, which was a brushier desert but still dirt, dirt, dirt. Arizona was a pitiful excuse of a desert. My mom glanced at me and I forced my lips into a convincing smile. Only a few more hours of driving and I would be face to face with my new family. I rolled my eyes at the desert—not a beautiful sandy one—a desert filled with dirt, and maybe even a few corses.

When I think of dirt, I think of anger, annoyance, and cold-hard rage. When I think of dirt, I think of all it stole from me and I blame it. I blame this goddamn dirt. Instead of nurturing me like a budding flower, it would suck me dry. It would bury me alive. It would take everything from me.

Now, looking back, I feel childish. How could dirt cause all my problems? Sure, ever since moving to the desert, countless bad things had happened. Did my life get turned upside-down? Yes. Did I lock myself away most days, hiding my depression? All the time. Did my grandma, not even a year since moving, die? Of course she did. But no, how could I blame the desert for all my problems? It was after all, just dirt. ■ ■ ■

DON'T LIE TO ME



Alyssa Guerra

I could feel the pain in my throat grow as I forced myself to not cry. It felt as if I had swallowed a cactus. I focused on the road in front of me as I drove on the freeway past the Cardinals' stadium. I was on the phone with my boyfriend, I had planned to stop by his house after visiting both of my nanas for Thanksgiving.

"I'm on my way home, can I stop by?" I asked while trying to keep my composure.

"Yeah, we're about to eat dinner, are you hungry?" he replied

"Kind of, I'm driving though so I'll text you when I get there." I said. I was using all my energy to try and act normal even though I was overwhelmed.

"Okay bye, I love you!" he said.

"I love you too." I replied. I then hung up the phone.

As I was driving in my 2012 Jeep Wrangler, I noticed the sun setting, it was slowly making its way down the sky. It was a relieving sight, it reminded me that there's always beauty somewhere in life, I just had to find it. The sunset looked like a painter's palette. The sky was smudged with pinks and purples, and the sun was a bright white. Yet, the rings around the sun glowed in an orange to red gradient. The red rays spread throughout the sky and rested upon the clouds which then turned into a vibrant fuchsia color. The sky was made up of vibrant warm colors, however these colors were calming. At this point, I had taken the loop onto the I-10 headed west.

I was listening to my Car Songs playlist on Spotify, this consisted of songs I can sing along with. I've always loved singing. It was a strategy to cope with stress. Singing helps control my breathing, and focus my thoughts on being productive. I was singing along with Smokey Robinson's song "Cruisin'." My favorite part to sing along with was "Let the music take your mind, just release and you will find." Not only was it a fun part to sing along to, it also expressed what I was trying to accomplish while singing.

My music suddenly stopped as my phone began to vibrate. This was the worst part of listening to music off my phone and not a CD. I answered my phone as I pulled up to the spotlight on the Bullard exit. It was my boyfriend again.

"Hello?" I answered

"Hi" he said. His voice was deeper than usual. He is 18, a very pale Caucasian with pretty blue, gold rimmed eyes. I could see those eyes through the phone.

"What's wrong?"

"You can't come to the dinner. My parents said it's for family only, it's like a tradition or something." His voice went to a low grumble. He did this often when his parents' guilt tripped him. I remembered when he was supposed to go to my and his favorite little cousin's birthday and his parents made him go to someone's soccer game.

The last few minutes driving, I spent trying to calm down flew out the window. The sun was almost gone and the dark sky was settling in its place.

"Okay that's fine. I'll just go home." I said firmly as I switched my lights on.

"I'm sorry," he said softly.

"I'm not mad or anything, today was just rough, my dad stayed home from family traditions because of the ridiculous amount of tension within our families. I don't blame him, I can barely handle the way his side of the family is being right now. That alone was awful, and then my mom didn't want us going over there at all but I told my nana I would. So, I stopped by, just me and my younger siblings. It was not fun, I could see how hurt my nana was and I could see how stressed everyone else was. This all happened because of me and the dress situation. I shouldn't have given my cousin that dress my Tia picked for me just to satisfy Michelle."

I paused.

"It's not your fault." He said reassuringly, "Keep going"

"I'm just mad, I would rather have your family be forward and admit they don't like or want me there than have an excuse. This kind of thing happens way more than it should." I confessed calmly.

"They do like you." He replied.

"It doesn't feel like it," I said

"They do, I'm serious, this same thing happened to my uncle and his girlfriend. They dated for years but she wasn't invited to family stuff because they weren't married." He said softly, "they do this to everyone and it's not personal."

"How did that go?"

"They went to Vegas, got married and haven't been to a Thanksgiving since."

"Do you really think this story makes things better? Or are you suggesting we get married and run away together?"

"No, I don't know. I don't know what to say or do because I'm in a position where I can't do anything, and it sucks. If it makes you feel better when I talked to them earlier, they said you can come by after the dinner."

"I don't want to come by at all at this point. I'm not family. I'm not going to intrude on your family time. It's okay, I'm fine, I want to spend time with my dad anyway" I said firmly.

"Okay." He said calmly.

"I love you, I'll talk to you later." I said.

"Okay, I love you too. Drive safe." He replied.

I hung up the phone and allowed myself to cry. The music popped back on since the phone call was over and it started playing "Angels" by Chance the Rapper. There's no way I can let myself cry while listening to Chance the Rapper, I lowered my music to where I could barely hear it. The tears gathered in my eyes and blurred my vision, forcing me to continuously blink. It was like heavy rain on a car windshield. *I need to stop crying this is unsafe for driving*, I thought to myself. By now, I was passing the Estrella Star Tower in the Estrella housing development. I pulled myself together and decided to call my dad.

"Hey Siri, call dad" I said to my phone.

"Calling Dad: man's head with medium skin tone" the automated voice said back. Siri likes to do this thing where she adds the name of the emoji I have added to the contact's name. I waited for my dad to pick up the phone. It rang once...twice...

"Hello?"

"Hi dad, are you still home?" I asked

"Yeah, why?"

"I got really mad at your son while at nana's house with mom. I left so no one else had to suffer because I was in a bad mood."

"What'd he do?"

"He argued with mom for a half hour, he wanted to go Black Friday shopping. She said no because he's 12 and she doesn't want to stress about him being out there."

"So why are you mad?"

"Because I tried to reason with him and he said rude things. He likes to criticize me about off topic things to get under my skin."

"And you let him?"

"Yeah I suck. I'll be home soon"

"Okay bye"

"Bye"

I hung up the phone as I pulled into my neighborhood. I noticed a lady walking her Husky and I wondered how well that dog survives with the summer heat. I pushed the garage button as I approached by house and proceeded to pull in and park. I closed the garage and left my car and entered the house, a typical two story development home. I could hear my dad watching a documentary. I set my keys down on the island and walked to the living room where he was. I sat on the couch across from him and took off my shoes. My Dad is a bald Latino man with thick framed glasses who always wears his UPS uniform, but not on Thanksgiving. Today, he was wearing dark green/blue plaid pajama pants and a grey cartoon owl t-shirt.

"Do you think things would be different if the dress situation didn't happen?" I asked.

"Probably not," he said. He had a cup in his hand and a mouth full of sunflower seeds. He spit a seed into his cup and continued talking. "Something else would've happened. The tension was building regardless and people are making stupid mistakes."

"I went to both nanas' houses, I took the children and we went to your mom's first."

"How did that go?"

"They asked if you were coming and I said you stayed home. Nana looked really sad and had a hard time with eye contact. The whole place was full of tension and it was awkward."

"That's their fault," he said as he spit another seed in the cup. "Anything can happen and I'll accept it, I'll talk it out move on and get over it, but the one thing that I can't stand is lying. I don't understand why it's so hard to be honest. If your tia was mad about you not wanting the dress, then okay fine, if she talked to Francisco's wife about it then fine. But just don't lie about it."

Francisco is my dad's half-brother that we just recently found out about.

"Yeah, that makes sense." I replied. "Jordan's family said I can't go over because I'm not family."

"Seriously?" he asked. He then lowered the TV so we could talk.

“Yeah, I guess they did the same thing to his uncle and he ran away and got married”
My dad started laughing in response to that he then said, “They didn’t learn from that time?”
“I guess not,” I replied while letting out a chuckle.
“Well I guess it’s just you and me then,” he said while turning up the TV volume.
“I’m fine with that,” I said as I laid back on the couch and covered myself in pillows. I then spent the rest of the evening watching movies with my dad. ■ ■ ■

ANAPHORA POEM: FEAR ITS SELF

Cadenn Thiele

We believe that heinous demons lurk within the shadows,
We believe monsters hide in the un seeable black.
We believe the safety of light will bring comfort
We believe if we close our doors, beasts won’t attack.

My fears do not follow these rules
My fears will not give me refuge during the day.
My fears say true safety doesn’t exist
My fears will not let mornings drive it away.

It is seen in the nook of my vision,
It is a brief glimpse of the malformed.
It is the slithers and writhes behind my view,
It is stretching for me, its limbs deformed.

The cold wind impact and branches sway
The cold barren streets, lifeless as the deceased.
The cold misty night rolls in as a fog lays dense
The cold feeling of a hideous anxiety will never be ceased.

The once wholesome child begins to vanish,
The once quite hollers about the nonexistent.
The once soft dreams are filled with terror
The once distant dread is no longer distant.

Now I know stalking prey draws to an end,
Now I see it instantly come for me.
Now I feel its oppressive, its corrupt presence,
Now I beg for my release as it disregards my plea.

Again I’m trapped in its grasp so constricting,
Again my effort will not break myself free.
Again it turns my head and makes me scream,
Again its empty face gurgles and squeals with glee.

I battle the serpentine arms twist pulling me closer,
I battle the tears that form, through eyes that don’t exist.
I battle as my body collapses, motionless and silent
I battle as my soul becomes too weak to resist.

There has to be a reward for goodness;
There has to be some respite for faith.
There has to be more than its tormenting flame,
So I continue to battle against fears burning embrace. ■ ■ ■



HOW MALLORY BECAME ZAYN

Mallory Gordon



Ever since I was younger, I've always wanted to be a boy. I stated this flat out to my parents at about the age of seven, "I wish I was a boy." They dismissed it as me being a tomboy, which was basically saying I was a girl who liked boy things. My little sibling and I always played with cars, trucks, animals, and Legos, but not Barbie dolls or any other toys that were geared towards girls. Dresses were, and still are, the bane of my existence. I loved pretending to be the male figure when I would play with my sibling or cousins. I didn't realize at that age that how I felt was how many transgender people feel at one time or another in their lives. I wouldn't realize who I really was until ten years later, during my senior year of high school.

I first learned about what transgender people were through websites like Tumblr and YouTube. I liked to research the different sexualities and gender identities because I liked the idea of fluid gender identities. I didn't identify as bisexual or pansexual until I began dating girls. I never considered myself to be transgender because I thought that a lot of girls may not feel comfortable having female genitals and boobs. I felt like the terms 'gender fluidity' and 'lesbian' applied more to me. When I first delved into my sexuality, I called myself a lesbian. I preferred labelling myself as such because liking girls was a more "male" thing to do. I switched between identifying as lesbian and bisexual because I went through a short phase my freshman and sophomore years where I only had crushes on girls. Most of the girls I had crushes on were either straight or very feminine. I think I crushed harder on the straight girls because I wanted to be their girlfriend who did all the things a boyfriend would do.

Another thing that caused me to realize I wanted to be a boy was when I realized I liked girls, in the way that a boy would like girls. The first girl I ever dated was named Kat. She lived in Florida and I met her online over the summer between my eighth grade and freshman year. Our six-month relationship was entirely over the internet, which included texting on an app called Wattpad and calling each other over the video chatting apps Skype and Oovoo. Whenever we talked or planned stuff for our 'future,' I always imagined myself as the male figure in the relationship. I wanted to be the one holding the door for her, I



POSTSTORM

Alyssa Guerra

wanted to be the dominant one, I wanted to be the one to propose first if we were ever to marry. At the time, we were, however, in a bi-sexual relationship where we were both attracted to males and females, and were both known to the people we knew as girls. Despite going through a period where I considered myself to be a girl, I still wanted to be identified as the more masculine figure in the relationship.

In my second relationship with a girl, I continued my trend of being the more masculine partner. Ashley was a girl I met my sophomore year of high school. Our relationship was my first in-person relationship with a girl. I acted on my urges to be the masculine partner. I tried to pay for everything if we went out on a date, I held doors for her, and I was the big spoon when we cuddled. I liked being the masculine figure. Ashley and I eventually broke up, but we remain friends to this day.

My current relationship with my girlfriend, Emily, is the relationship that really spurred me to rethink myself and who I wanted to be. When I first met Emily, I thought she was a guy until she introduced herself as Emily and told me that she was transgender. I figured Emily would be a good person for my transgender sibling, Alex, to talk to as I didn't know what gender I was and didn't truly understand what transgender was yet. Alex, my brother, was the first transgender person I had ever known in-person that I knew was transgender. I didn't understand Alex at first because I thought she was just a masculine girl. When Alex started going by Alex instead of Katelyn, wearing boxers, using male deodorant, and binding with sports bras, it clicked in my head what transgender was. In my relationship with Emily, I explored my newfound identity.

Soon after we met, both Emily and I admitted we had feelings for each other and began dating. As I got to know Emily more as my friend and as my girlfriend, I started to understand the idea of being transgender more. Emily always told me that she was open to any questions I had. The more I learned about what transgender was, the more I began to question if I really wanted to be Mallory, a girl. I described to Emily how I was feeling and she said it sounded like I was trans-male.

Emily helped me understand gender dysphoria, which is the feeling that your mental state doesn't match your body. Gender dysphoria is like being a boy waking up with a vagina and breasts, or being a girl and waking up lacking breasts and having a penis. I thought that not being able to use a tampon because I was uncomfortable and scared about touching anywhere near down there was normal. I never realized I was experiencing gender dysphoria because I thought that it was normal to go between liking my somewhat small breasts, to not liking my small breasts and going back to liking the size of my breasts. Most of the time, I liked having relatively small breasts. It meant that I could maybe be mistaken for a guy. This started occurring to me as soon as I cut my hair very short for the first time.

First, it was Alex that couldn't even recognize me as I walked out of the bathroom. Then it was my friend's sister who asked, "Who's that cute guy you were talking to?" to which my friend replied, "That's just Mallory." After that, it was people in the drive-thru at restaurants doing a double take and correcting themselves when they realized I was a girl. Even an older gentleman at Estrella Mountain Community College came up to my guy friend and I when we were looking for my class and said, "Do you two boys need help finding anything?" I began talking, and my higher pitched voice giving away my femininity, and the older man quickly corrected himself, apologizing for his mistake in the process. Of course, I didn't mind. I liked it when people mistook me for a boy. It made me feel more masculine and more sure of my gender. Often, I would try to hunch over slightly when wearing baggy clothing to hide my small but still noticeable breasts. Even though I'd sometimes hurt my throat and vocal chords because my voice doesn't go very low, I would try to talk deeper than normal. Recently, I even started using men's deodorant, cologne, and body wash. All of these things just confirmed what I felt: I am a boy, turning into a man.

Living in a household where only one parent is accepting of your sexuality or your gender identity is strenuous. I have yet to tell my parents that I feel like I am not a girl. It's pretty much just my mom who supports Alex and me. My dad will have nothing to do with it. My mom still always uses the name when speaking to Alex. I understand only because it's her kid and she has known Alex as Katelyn her whole life and will probably always call Alex by his birth name. She tries her best to support Alex, though. My mom got him boxers, male t-shirts, and lets him bind to have a flatter chest. She also buys various male hygiene products for him. She even let him cut his hair when I got mine cut. My dad dismisses all of it as "just a phase" that he'll get over eventually. His refusal to accept Alex has gotten me into a few screaming matches with him over why he doesn't have a clue what Alex is going through. He says he does accept him, but I argue that tolerance and ignorance is not acceptance. No matter how I put it, how Alex feels and how I feel are just weird ideas to my dad that he'll always be closed off to because it's his "God given right to believe what he wants." I think the worst fight I got into with my dad was when he called Emily a boy and said, "If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it's a duck." Basically, he was saying since Emily has facial hair, no boobs, and has a penis, she is a boy. I asked him what happens after she has transitioned? Is she still a boy when she "walks like a duck, talks like a duck," with breasts and a vagina? He ignored me and shoved off the topic by talking to my mom instead.

Emily helped me figure out what name I wanted to use now that I identified as trans-male. She would go through lists of boy names with me, calling them out one by one, seeing if I liked any of them. That never really helped because I still felt like I couldn't be anyone else, I could only be Mallory. I didn't think any other name would fit me. It finally clicked what name I wanted to go by when I was hanging out with Emily at Alex's school parade. Emily had been texting a friend she hadn't talked to in a while, a girl whose name I can't remember who I'll just call Mary. She told Mary that she was in a relationship with me. Mary excitedly asked for a picture of the new boyfriend, and Emily snapped a quick picture of me to send back to her. Mary said the usual "I'm happy for you" spiel that everyone goes through when they see a friend's new significant other. She also said that I looked like Zayn from One Direction. I laughed as I was nowhere near looking like him, except for my hair. This name stuck in my head for a while after that night. A few weeks later, I was talking to Emily once more and mentioned that I wanted to go by a different name now. She asked me what name I chose and I thought for a minute. Zayn was the first name I thought of that I liked and thought fit me. I finally decided I was going to go by Zayn. Emily told me that she was now going to change my contact name from "Mallory the beautiful" to "Zayn the handsome." I was never really Mallory. I always had a longing to be someone else, particularly someone else who was a guy. Finally, I understand why I've been feeling so uncomfortable in my body the past seventeen years. I finally realized who I really am. I'm Zayn, the boy with breasts and a vagina. ■ ■ ■



IN THE SOUTH

Cristina Colon Pizarro

At Moon Lake Elementary, four classrooms were put into 'pods' or 'teams.' I was part of the Sandhill Crane pod. Moon Lake Elementary was situated in a newly developing county, Pasco County, Florida. New gated communities were popping up everywhere. Before all the new construction, Pasco County was a heavily-wooded place with dirt roads leading to trailer-style homes. The local, self-proclaimed 'Moon Lakers' took pride in showing off their Confederate flags and calling themselves rednecks.

I'd been living in Pasco County in the town of New Port Richey for one year. I lived in one of the new gated communities called Forest Pointe. There was a stigma towards the people who lived in the new gated communities. Locals would call us the 'rich people' or simply say that we were stuck up. At times, some Moon Lakers would get into the gated communities by piggybacking on a car going into the neighborhood. They would go around the neighborhood in their raised trucks blaring rock music and peeling out their tires, leaving marks on the road and spreading smoke.

It was fall and I was eight years old and happy with school. I was lunch time for the Sandhill Crane pod. I sat next to my classmates Nicole, Jacquelyn, Vicky, and Kaleigh. They were all Caucasian and I made up one of the four Latino students attending Moon Lake. To be specific, it was me, my two siblings, and a Mexican girl named Edna who were the only Latinos. For lunch, I always chose regular milk, not chocolate milk. While I was chatting with my friends about the *Spy Kids* movie, a Caucasian boy with a shaved head named Zach approached me and said, "Why are you drinking white milk?" Before I could even think of something to say, Zach tipped over my carton of milk and said, "Just because you drink white milk, it doesn't mean you're going to get whiter!" At that point, I didn't know how to properly react. My heart was beating as fast as it could. I could feel my face getting hotter and hotter, and my palms quickly became wet. I continued to sit and listen to Zach say more things like, "Go back to where you came from!" and "You'll never be like white people!" My friends didn't know what to do and just kept telling Zach to shut up. My eyes filled to the brim with tears and a single, fat tear rolled down my face.

Before long, the cafeteria aide dismissed us by table to throw out our trash and line up. My math teacher and my favorite teacher, Mr. Engle came to collect us. Mr. Engle was very tall, bald, a huge Tampa Bay Buccaneers fan, and was like a best friend to me. I was always comfortable telling him anything and he did his best to make every student feel important. We got back to the classroom and Mr. Engle came over to me after noticing my shaken face. It was very obvious to him that I was not okay, since I was not being my usual bubbly, playful self. He asked me if anything was wrong and I began to cry. Mr. Engle then walked me outside of the classroom and I told him what had occurred at lunch.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I will take care of this."

Mr. Engle decided to write a disciplinary note for Zach and a write-up form, both of which would be sent to our principal, Mrs. Esterbrook. I was back in my seat and my friend Nicole told me, "Zach is my neighbor and that his father encourages him to say racist things." The school day finally ended and I waited for my older brother Hector and my younger sister Stephanie. I walked home silently while my siblings chatted about their day. Our walk was only about seven to ten minutes long.

We got home and I was greeted by my grandmother Ann, who is Korean. I didn't want to tell her about Zach, due to her limited English. I ate a Swiss Roll and waited for our parents to come home from work. My dad came home first. My dad Hector, was tall, clean-shaven, and had an intimidating glare. He walked through the door in his blue and black uniform. He was an armored truck driver for Brinks in Tampa, Florida. I hugged him, gave him a kiss, and told him what Zach said to me. "He told me to go back where I came from." I said.

My father's face turned sour and his eyebrows kneeled closer together. He said, "I am taking you to class tomorrow." And he did.

My tall father strode into the elementary school like a narcotics agent. He walked into Mr. Engle's office and sat down on the small chair as if he was ready to shine an interrogation light into his face. I was standing to the side watching this all happen.

"We will give Zach a one-day suspension," Mr. Engle said firmly. My dad said "Okay," and he reached over and shook Mr. Engle's hand. My dad hugged me and left for work. I stayed and Mr. Engle sent me off to homeroom.

I'm sure at the time, for my dad, it was an acceptable punishment. But for me it was simply not enough. Zach returned, smirking and unapologetic. He sat his skinny body and shaved head down across the room from me. He talked back to the teacher as if nothing had happened. Because of Zach, I was scared that I would be approached by others and treated the same way Zach treated me. I didn't want to be near Zach ever. I did my best to not make contact with him in class. Zach has changed how I view people I meet. To this day, I don't fully trust everyone I encounter. ■ ■ ■

JEFFREY AND POOKIE: THE PROFESSIONAL GENIE

Guillermo Calvillo



"Yo Jeffrey! Get out of there, don't you know that's where the Wilsons died?" By then it was too late. I was already knee deep in weeds running across the field, heading towards the abandoned trailer home. "Man, relax Leo. It's perfectly safe to smoke in there. The Wilsons died 10 years ago. Plus, that way we don't have to worry about the wind blowing out the blunt," I said. Leo followed me, nervously looking around as we walked deeper and deeper into the woods towards the trailer. It was dusk and the sun was halfway into the ground.

I got to the trailer and up close, it looked like it was part of a *Friday the 13th* movie series or some serial killer documentary. It was grimy and old with the whole forest as the backyard. Looking back, I could see Leo in the distance slowly making his way towards me. "Hurry up! We only have like 30 minutes before it gets dark," I yell. "By then, it will be a real hassle trying to find our way out," I thought. I try to open the door but it was locked from the inside. I circle around to the backyard. There was a rusty old car sitting on blocks and a bundle of random metal junk. The back door was locked as well, so I get ready to tackle it when suddenly I feel a hand grab me. I jumped back to see who it was.

"Hey, Jeffrey can you get in?"

"Oh, you're here, no man it's locked, maybe through a window," I say.

"Nope already checked them all." he says.

"Let's try to open this one up then." I grab a big rock and smash the window in.

"After you, sir," I say.

"What! It's your idea, you go first, I'm not trying to get cut," says Leo.

"Ahh, fine, you prizzy." I get ready to step in through the window; I grab hold of both sides of the frame trying not to touch any of the glass.

"Ahh f***," I yell. A shard of glass cut through my jeans but hardly scratches my leg.

"See, that's what happens. I told you," he says.

"Shut your mouth, I just got a splinter." I carefully pull myself into the dusty room. It was an odd smell, almost like an antique store mixed with skunk, mixed with old people. "Damn, it's nice in here, come on Leo," I tell him.

"Naw, I'll just wait for you out here," he says.

"What! Bro, really? We came out here to enjoy this weed and you want to chicken out NOW, wow!"

"Wait, why don't you just open the door for me," he says.

"No, you're getting cut too, hurry up!" I yell.

"What the hell?"

"Ahh fine." I came into the living room, which was at the edge of the trailer. The door was all the way on the other side so I start heading for it. I get to the main door and see that it has four different locks. "Damn, they were really paranoid," I thought. I open the door for Leo and as soon as he comes in, we light the blunt and start smoking.

"Yea, this place is very creepy," says Leo. He seemed uncomfortable. His body kept making this weird twitch every couple of seconds and when he talked, it was in a soft quiet voice, I could hardly hear him.

"Yo, what do you think about it, not bad, huh, clean it up and we could really turn this place into a clubhouse, you know invite everyone; turn up in here," I say.

"Yea, for real," said Leo. He was staring at his hands and was twirling his fingers playing an invisible piano. He was making me uncomfortable. "Hey, what the hell are you doing?" I ask.

"I'm wrestling for control, I feel like I'm losing my hands, I can't feel them, even though I'm moving my fingers, inside it feels like I'm doing nothing."

"Man, you're just cold - here take these." I pick up a pair of mittens lying on the chair and hand them to him.

"Oh thanks," he says. He takes what seems like 10 minutes to put them on. "Oh man, that's much better. Thanks homie."

We finish smoking the blunt and at this point, I feel like I'm inside a movie. I then notice a large cabinet with little porcelain figures of children. I get up to get a closer look. There are at least 20 pieces, all children, all doing random tasks. They were frozen in time, a little scene on a daily routine, and yet, they were frozen in such a way as to give the impression of movement. Each different piece, I saw vividly in my head as if it were happening in real time. One was playing with the little roller coaster toys that you slide balls around in, the type you'd find at a doctor's or dentist's office. Poor kid, he's about to get shot up and doesn't even know it. Another was brushing his teeth standing on a small stool. Only the kid, the sink, and a mirror where sculpted. These figures weren't anything super-detailed but had just enough to give you a feel for the scene. I was hooked I kept glancing around at them. In another figure, a little girl was crying, looking down at a frog that appeared to be dead. In my mind, I see her dancing around it and then accidentally stepping on it, leaking out all his little guts out onto the pavement. At the bottom of each porcelain piece a branding: MY LITTLE MOMENTS. "What?" I mumble. I was starting to get freaked out.

"ARGHH!"

I drop the MY LITTLE MOMENTS piece, shattering as it hits the ground. I turn around slowly expecting to see some type of demon.

"Oh, Leo you okay?" I ask. I had become so trapped in my mind that I totally forgot there was another person in the room.

"Jeffrey, we have to leave, what are we doing here?" Leo asked, his voice shaking. "Wait! Where are we?" He started pacing around the table.

"Look, you need to calm down man. We're in the cabin in the woods. Uhh, I mean the trailer in the woods."

"We're in the woods?" He says. He looked like he was struggling to put his thoughts together, but his head was far too baked, and too slow.

"Yea, look." We go to the window in the living room and look out. Large trees surrounded us going off into the distance.

"See man, relax I think maybe that s*** was laced 'cause I was tweaking earlier too. But don't worry, as long as we keep calm we'll be aight," I tell him.

"Okay, it's just that, well, you know the Wilsons and the cutting of body parts and the suicides. Just being here in the same area where it happened is a bit f****ed," he says.

"Oh, come on Leo, you don't believe in poltergeists, do you?"

"What? Hell no, of course not. I'm not a kid."

"Well stop acting like one. Hey, you know what we should do now?" I ask him.

"What?"

"Let's go explore!"

"Huh?"

I think of the news reports I heard of Mr. Wilson, a construction worker, who came home one night, killed his wife and then himself. At school, his story became a myth and all the kids told their version of what happened. Some say that he caught his wife with another man, so he skinned her alive, and then wore her face before he shot himself, just so that he could say he killed her twice. Others say, he just came home drunk one night and decided to chop her head off because she wouldn't rub his feet. Other even say that they were abducted by aliens and then experimented on. So many different stories, all probably just bulls****. The papers just said they were found dead on arrival and from the autopsy, they could only



THE CORNER

Brigidann Minerva

conclude that they both died from heart attacks. Both?

As we head to the hallway, I open the first door on the left to see what was inside. I was amazed to find all sorts of electronics. A television, a computer, couches, and a collection of movies. I felt as though we had entered a very different home. This room looked cleaner and it was painted a bright green shade.

“Hey what’s that?” I say pointing to a box on the right side of the room underneath a painting of flowers.

“Damn that looks just like that one chest from *Dragon Tales*,” says Leo smirking.

“Wait, from what?”

“*Dragon Tales*, you know that show with the two kids and they find a dragon scale that allows them to travel to a magical land filled with...” He paused for a second becoming self-conscious of what he was saying. “Yeah I remember my dumb mom would make me sit and watch that silly show with my sister.”

“Bro, shut up, you know damn well you still watch that s***, I mean there’s nothing to be embarrassed about I always liked that show especially those twins, the two-headed dragons,” I say.

“Oh, Zack and Weezy, yeah, they crack me up too bro,” he said enthusiastically.

“Right, anyway, let’s see what’s inside.” I go to the dusty chest, open it, and there it was - a round pearl like crystal, pinkish-purple in color.

“Hey, look it’s a dragon scale, Leo,” I say.

“Oh snap, it actually looks like one,” he says. We both begin to laugh for about 5 minutes.

“Man, we should say that phrase from the show. How did it go? I wish, I wish, with all my heart, something, something, come out now.”

“That’s not how it goes, you idiot, it’s...” I give Leo a stale face. But, suddenly the pearl in my hand begins to glow bright pink, illuminating the entire room. The whole scene begins to swirl. “AHHH, WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON!” I yell. It felt like the whole room was being flushed down the toilet. I looked around; everything was twirling and blurry. “Leo, I can’t move!” I look at him, barely making out his face he looked like he was blurring away too. He didn’t say anything. I let go and everything just

fades to white.

I wake up with searing pain in my back. "Must have fallen asleep on the floor again," I thought. I'm stuck to this floor, I can't move, my body feels very heavy. I stare at the ceiling watching the fan as it goes round and round. I could not remember what just happened. I tried thinking about what I was doing here, but nothing. Just blank. Suddenly, I hear voices off in the distance having a conversation.

"Oh man, that's crazy. I can't believe that."

"Well believe it little guy I'm here, I'm out, and ready to serve."

"Wait, if you can make wishes, why didn't you just escape?"

"Well you see, when I was appointed this job, it came with a set of rules that I must follow."

"Wow, what were they?"

"You want some more tea?"

"Yes please."

"Well, even though I can make any wish come true for other people, for myself, I only got but three."

"What? That sucks. So, what did you choose?"

I recognized one of those voices. It was...

"LEO! YOU OKAY MAN? WHERE ARE WE!" I yelled, getting up and seeing Leo sitting in a table across from an old man having tea. "Hmm, who are you and what's going on?" I asked.

"Hey sleepy head," the mysterious old man said with a grin on his decrepit face. He looked like he was in his sixties, wearing some brown suspenders and a grey coat. He had yellow slicked-back hair under a small porkpie hat, a golden hoop earring on his right ear, and he was smoking a cigarette.

"Leo, who is this old man, he looks like a slyster," I say, looking at a Leo who was smiling while sitting in his chair. "Relax Jeffrey, this is our friend, come sit with us he brought Arizona iced teas," Leo says pointing at a jug of sweet tea.

"Naw man, I only like green tea. Anyway, what the hell is going on? What happened? All I remember was the room was spinning and I was holding a pink pearl," I say.

"Aha, so it was YOU that has freed me from the confines of my cave! For that, I am in debt to you and shall now give my all to making your wishes become a reality," he says.

"This has to be some kind of joke. Where did you come from? You must be a hobo, no doubt, probably been living here since this trailer was abandoned." "Look," I say, pulling out a white object from my coat pocket, "I still have a joint left, if you want you can smoke with us, but, don't be such a weirdo."

I sit down with them at the table and light the joint taking two puffs from it before passing it to Leo.

"Sir, please you have the wrong idea. Allow me to reintroduce myself. My name is Pookie, professional genie. Here to serve all your needs and wishes," he says. I give him a stale look and notice the joint go out. I try several times to light it before my thumb starts hurting. It seems the lighter is out of gas.

"Damn, it's windy in here, why is that fan on? It's like 40 degrees outside dammit. And you," I say pointing at the old man, "Stop talking nonsense. Do you really expect me to believe that genies exist here, in Illinois, in the 21st century?"

"Trust me Jeffrey, he is real. How do you think the fan is on if this house has no electricity? When I woke up, I was so nervous I was sweating like crazy so he turned it on with his magic to calm me down. He is really nice," says Leo, with a look of excitement.

"Oh, it's alright dear boy," the genie says looking at Leo. "I guess you just have to see it to believe it, huh Jeffrey? The way modern society is programmed, I too would be doubtful of magic. Here, how about I get that for you?" He then snaps his fingers and the joint immediately lights up. "No way, this guy is the real deal," I thought. "Hmm ok, ok, so you are a genie. Although, my joint is now burning unevenly," I say to him, trying to remain calm.

Leo, Pookie, and I sit at the table, in an empty room, inside an abandoned trailer home. Sipping tea and discussing my wishes. "Hold on Pookie, I thought I heard you say rule-free wishes earlier, so what do you mean you can't make me the emperor of this world?"

"Jeffrey as much as I wish I could effortlessly create for you, I can't. I am a genie, and I can do amazing things for you, but, something as grandiose as that is just out of my reach. Actually, extremely out of my reach. Making YOU, a kid, the king of this world, would require totally reshaping mankind. Society! Humanity! The whole damn human civilization! I don't have enough power to do that. I don't believe anyone does."

"God can," I say in a smart tone.

"He can. But he won't. Plus, my young boy, why would you want that much power? In my opinion, it would be boring to have it all. Don't you suppose?" says Pookie.

"I don't care for your opinion. You said you were my genie. To serve and fulfill my every wish. I knew it was too good to be true." Leo just stayed quietly sipping his Arizona tea. Lost in the mood.

"My dear boy, I do believe we have gotten off on the wrong spizz. Let me remind you, that you are

talking to a Genie who can give you a sports car, a pool table, a truckload of chocolate bars. You have 10 wishes from me. I advise you not to dwell on my limitations and do look at the bright side, I can still make many of your wildest desires a reality for you. So how about you TRY AGAIN," he says. I noticed he seemed to be getting agitated. There was a vein bulging out of his neck and I swear I just saw his eyes turn red.

"Wait! Leo, what time is it?" I say interrupting the conversation.

"I don't know, my phone died."

"S***, s***, s***!" I run to the living room. Looking out the window, I realize it got brighter outside and the sun was coming up.

"Leo, we are so screwed!" I yell across the trailer. Leo comes running and says, "oh, man, damn...our parents must be worried sick."

"Knowing my mom, she probably thinks I'm dead in a ditch by now," I say watching Leo nervously inhale the joint. "Man throw that s*** away! We must have a clean head to deal with this," I yell. "Plus, weren't you nervous, smoking in here?"

"It went away honestly, I kinda like this trailer now. It's very...cozy," says Leo with a twinkle in his eye.

I stare at him for a minute before we both burst out laughing. "Wait, the genie. Duh, he can help us. We will just wish ourselves home," I say. We run into the second room on the left where the genie was. As we get in, we notice that it's empty. Just a rectangular table in the middle with chairs. I look around. No genie. No tea. Just emptiness. ■ ■ ■

MEAT

Kenny Meyer

Lifeless, hanging from a hook
Stomach sliced open
Guts spilled to the floor
A life wasted for meat

Screams of pain echo
Gore stains the floor
Boots squish through red
Hooks rusted with flesh

Tails torn off
Squeals bounce from wall to wall

Thrown in shit, humiliated
Never to see their mother again

Crammed into cages
Snapped limbs and wings
Flapping louder than dynamite
Throats slit, gone limp

Spit dribbling down a Mac
Barbecue sauce drenched over a McRib
Greasy fingers clamped on McNuggets
Birthed to be consumed ■ ■ ■



THE BEAST WITHIN

Brandon Christopher

This is why I wear these eyes, to (show) (hide) the feelings that lie inside. Her name is envy but others may know her as/but others may call her the green eyed beast. Ever glutinous feasting on mine and others insecurities. I ask why them and not me? Now look through these emerald stained spheres. So bright it's almost blinding. Now all I see is the world covered is a shade of jade. Happiness, love, prosperity, wealth, health and longevity. Which will never be mine. And time will prove me right. Day and night, day and night, day and night. So much time has passed by. And I'm still being controlled by this relentless harpy. I want you. I want yours. And in trying I just shut more doors. So I digress from my eternal quest of self-equality. For now I have something you don't have. Love for feelings like sad. Now I am the true face of envy. I remove my glasses that shaded the truth. For I am envy. In which I feel no shame. ■ ■ ■



WHO ARE YOU?

Kimberly Cuison

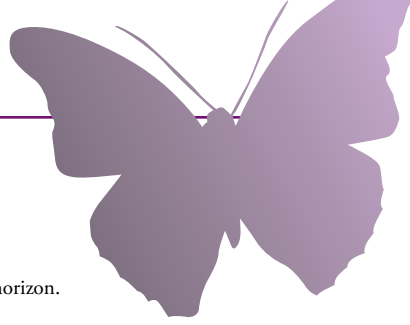
Tell me,
Who the hell do you think you are? Huh?
You stay up all night,
Your eyes hypnotized by the pixels that shine before you,
Lose sleep and shutting your eyes when the sun kisses the horizon.

Tell me,
Who the hell do you think you are? Huh?
You double tap, and pin things to your mind
Thinking it gives you inspiration
When you're just another sorry imitation.

Tell me,
Who the hell do you think you are? Huh?
You say you got it figured out,
then why are you still jobless
With a pout on your face while you're sitting on your mama's couch.

Tell me,
Who the hell do you think you are? Huh?
You walk around fake happy, until it feels real
Thinking its working for your mental,
But it's just making you mental.

Tell me,
Who do you see when you look into the mirror? Huh?
Cause all I see is a jobless insomniac
with an obsessive amount of mood boards,
who is faking it until she makes it. ■ ■ ■



MELANCHOLY

Jennifer Kenny

Depression is not the absence of satisfaction,
It does not exhibit as a tragic production,
It cannot always be discerned,
By those who do not know what to spot out
It does not present itself only at times,
Of corresponding shadows
It cannot be expelled by moments of
Relative exhilaration

It can be hit by situations of the world outside,
Perpetually it is there

At best,
It exists inside of the host
Like an infection, waiting, steadily.
For the right second to ignite
And take control over the body.

At worst,
It would be in complete control

Yanking the individual down with it
Into a murky, shallow water
Not letting go, no matter how hard the host tries
To be in command and dominate its kingdom
again.

Yet it does not matter
How content you are with everyday things,
How well you are doing financially or
physically,
How wonderful your life is going,
Depression is always absolute
Not noticing it does not mean that it is not
present,

It is a feeling of hopelessness
And an unconscious discontinuation of belief
There is a constant annoying hurt and pain
Eventually it is accepted
And you are accustomed to it. ■ ■ ■



MOONLIGHT BUNNIES



Joe Dirt

I woke up with the phone ringing. I opened my eyes, and quickly shut them. I slowly opened them to see a pair of underwear draped over a chair and balcony doors open to a city in the background. The phone continued to ring. I wished for it to stop so I can get some sleep. I popped out of bed and wondered where in the hell am I and why was I naked? I realized I was in my hotel room in Guatemala City. With the phone still ringing I looked at my clock and quickly answered the phone.

“Where in the heck are you?” someone said.

I then asked, “Who is this?”

“It’s me John.”



SPACEMAN

Fallon Apodaca

"You're 15 minutes late," John said.

I quickly got up, put on my flight suit, shaved, and ran downstairs. I felt the hangover starting to come up. My mouth started getting watery and tingly. It felt like someone put pennies in my mouth and my stomach was starting to bubble. I wasn't able to focus. Everything began to jump around. I leaned around a corner so no one could see me and I threw up in a trash can. As I walked toward the lobby, with everyone looking, it felt like I had entered a forbidden dark forest. The only thing I saw was red, piercing eyes.

My boss shook his head and said, "Today of all days, everything got pushed back an hour! You're lucky that the Secret Service is running late." Embarrassed, I entered a black Suburban where my buddy John was waiting. I looked at him and asked why he didn't wake me up?

"I was late too," John said.

"Do I look as bad and smell as bad as you do?" I asked.

"Nope! You look way worse," he said.

Our convoy finally reached the U.S. Embassy. We had a chance to clean up a little bit before our briefing. We couldn't get rid of the smell of alcohol that was coming out of our pores. I noticed beautiful pink yellowish flowers next to the window, so I plucked the flowers, crushed them in my hands, rubbed it all over my chest, arms, and neck. I rubbed it quickly on my balls and handed it to John. With a disgusted look on his face, he rubbed the flowers on his arms and chest. As we left the bathroom, an older gentleman wearing a suit approached us and said, "Rough night fellas? I've been there before," as he handed us cups of coffee.

After the briefing, we conveyed to the airport where we waited for Secret Service to go through our equipment. We waited for 30 minutes when we received the call that the mission had been canceled.

"You guys are so freaking lucky, let's go back to the hotel," my boss, who looked like a mad man, said. The entire ride back I was trying to figure what the hell happened last night. I looked over at John and could not tell if he was thinking the same thing. We couldn't talk about it because we weren't alone.

Looking out my window, I noticed how poor this country was. As I passed neighborhoods with dirt streets and no windows on the houses, to neighborhoods with concrete streets that looked like where I was from (South Phoenix; old and run down, but still livable). Finally, we hit some smooth asphalt downtown that was comparable to entering the Emerald City. In the center of uptown was a five-star hotel called the *Camino de Real*. It could have easily been Beverly Hills, with its white stucco walls, red tile on the roof, wooden railing, and beautiful plants and trees. Next to this hotel was sophisticated cigar shop. This cigar shop meant to attract wealthy business men with their Cuban cigars and well-aged scotch.

We finally arrived at the front of the hotel, where we all got out of the vehicles and met in the lobby when my boss said, "Same time tomorrow and don't be late!" John and I were waiting for everyone to go up to their rooms when Sharon (a petite slender-figured woman standing 5'2" tall with blonde hair, blue eyes and a nose that was a big as a toucan) said, "You missed a spot," as she removed lipstick from the back of my ear. Then, she gave me this flirtatious look as she walked by as she were Bo Derek (a perfect 10). "Yeah right; in your dreams," I thought to myself.

John and I quickly ran up to our rooms and agreed to meet downstairs at the bar in 30 minutes. John was the first to arrive, sitting at the end of the bar already with a drink in his hand. John has always been a buddy of mine. We went everywhere together. I would have his back and he had mine. He was from Boston, so he was a natural lush. He was white, of Irish descent, stood 6'2" with reddish-brown hair, and green eyes. He is a pretty muscular dude and would drink anyone under the table. In Honduras, once, we stayed up drinking until 5:30 a.m. and John decided to go for a light jog; 6 miles in 36 minutes. If anyone would remember about last night, it was him.

I quickly walked to John and said, "What the hell happened last night?"

He started laughing and said, "You don't remember? You are my hero! Dude, last night was wicked! The crap you did should have been put in a movie!" Then John asked me, "What's the last thing you remember?"

So, I retraced my steps starting around 11:00 in the morning. I just finished eating my breakfast outside on the patio at the hotel. I decided to walk next door to get a cigar and a drink. What the hell, it was close enough to noon. I pushed open the door and instantly could smell the mild cedar wood mixed in with fine tobacco smoke. The bar was very modern. There were beautiful leather sofas and chairs, rosewood colored tile on the floor, with a water fountain in the center of the room. The cigars sat along the whole side of the room behind glass windows. On the opposite side sat a full bar of expensive cognac, brandy, and scotch.

Pouring the drinks was a beautiful young lady in her early twenties by the name of Catalina. She was naturally beautiful and innocent looking. She didn't need a lot of make-up or any at all. Catalina had long layered wavy light brown hair, light skin, hazel eyes, light freckles on her nose and cheeks, and had the most amazing smile. She loved wearing silk dresses that would wrap to her perfect body and every time she leaned against the bar, her shoulder straps would fall around her shoulders.

"Hola!" she said.

"Buenos dias! You look beautiful today!" I said.

“What are you doing today? Would you like to go to a party?” she asked.

“I don’t know, I have important work tomorrow,” I said.

“Don’t worry, we will be back by midnight,” she replied.

“Okay! Can my friend come along?” I asked.

“Sure,” she said. “Dina is going too!” Dina worked at the bar. She was very pretty with natural bronze skin, black hair, perfect arched eyebrows, a great body, and seductive brown eyes. She would not give me the time of day out on the street. Catalina said, “Let’s meet at noon.” I called John and asked if he wanted to go.

“Does the Pope wear a hat? Of course, I want to go,” John said. So, we stood in front of the hotel when out of nowhere, a silver BMW convertible pulled up. The ladies were wearing shorts and bikini tops. Cat popped out the passenger seat and folded it down. I jumped in the back and she followed me. John got in the front seat. Now that we knew who’s with who, “Where we going?” I asked.

“Puerto San Jose beach for a party!” the girls said.

“What kind of party are we going to?” I asked.

“It’s an engagement party,” Cat said.

As we drove, it started getting more humid as we got closer to the beach. You could taste and smell the salt in the air. We drove over the hill and saw this great big ocean and a resort in front of us. We parked in the parking lot and walked along the side of the resort which was ocean access to a beach and bar. “Would you like something to drink?” I asked the ladies.

“Four tequila shots,” I asked the bartender. The bartender poured the shots. I handed everyone a shot.

“To Catalina!” shouted John.

“To Catalina!” I shouted.

“So where is the party?” John asked.

“Our friends are in the hotel and will meet us later,” Dina said. As I looked up from the beach at the outside deck of the hotel which is about 20 ft. higher than the beach,

“Why didn’t you go to the party?”



THE KISS

Roisin McDermott

"My father is the one getting engaged and I don't like the woman he is planning to marry. So, I told him I had to work the store today. Of course, he didn't mind - he preferred someone looking out for his store anyway," Cat explained.

"So, your dad owns the cigar shop?" I asked.

"Yes!" She said.

"That's why I get free cigars." I said.

She looked at me and said, "No! It's because I like you and you are nice. Plus, you have the most beautiful blue eyes." I grabbed her by the waist and kissed her firmly. Cat smiled and said, "Let's go sit by the beach."

"Do you want another drink?" I asked.

She told me to get a bottle.

I ordered a bottle of tequila from the bartender. We all walked to edge of the water and sat down for a little while. We each took turns drinking from the bottle when Cat grabbed my hand and pulled me up.

"Come with me," Cat said. We strolled down the edge of the beach with our feet in the water as the sun began to set. It felt good to have her body close to mine as she held me tight with both arms and having her head on my chest.

On our way back, we noticed John and Dina making out. We sat away from them as we watched the moon come up. I had never seen a moon this big in my whole life. I couldn't believe this. I never seen anything like this. The moon filled up the whole sky and the way it reflected off the water. It was like time just froze. Then a nice cool breeze hit my face. Serenity, I thought to myself. It felt like I was lifted off the ground and was floating through the universe. Cat pulled me close to her and softly kissed me on my cheek. I looked at her and I tell her, "This is the most beautiful place that anyone has ever taken me!"

She pulled me on top of her as she leaned back on the beach. We look at each other for a second. We both knew it felt like it was a once-in-a-lifetime moment. I lowered my head and kissed her. She wrapped her long, soft, smooth legs around my leg and put her arms around my neck and ran her fingers through my hair. I put my hand on her hip and slid my hand to the small of her back and pulled her in tight. We started to kiss harder as she swiveled her hips along my leg. She started to breathe harder as I began moving downwards, slowly, and softly began to kiss her neck. I slowly moved my hand along the top edge of her bikini line, smoothly caressing her soft skin over her hip to the front. I felt her hands grip my back as her nails started to dig in. She lowered her hands along my back and placed them on my upper part of my pants when she started to pull them down. Then, from a distance I heard someone yelling Catalina's name. I told myself to keep going maybe she didn't hear that.

"Catalina!" It was her friend coming from the party, along with a group of people.

Cat got up and said, "Come and meet my friends."

I disapprovingly said, "Go ahead, I need a minute". She walked to the gang as I jumped in the water for a bit.

I got up and walked towards Cat's friends. Catalina grabbed me and said, "Everyone this is Jose." Everybody greeted me. They were all well-dressed. The ladies wore skintight cocktail dresses and the men had suits with ties.

"What the hell are we doing here? Let's party!" one lady said. We all walked to the beach bar and someone started handing out champagne bottles. The music blasted the night with Spanish tropical music. Everyone that had a bottle shook it up in the air and champagne started falling from the sky. There must have been at least 20 bottles flowing. Cat ran to me and began kissing me. Everyone started pouring the remainder of the bottles on top of our heads. I couldn't breathe; the champagne was cold. Thank God! I was getting ready to bust out of my pants.

Then everyone started to sing "Pasa mi la Botella" ("Pass the Bottle") while dancing and grinding on each other. Bottles of rum and tequila were soon being passed around. That's when things started getting fuzzy. I remembered all of us trying to build a pyramid and playing in the water. I remember making out with Catalina in the water once more. And that's the last thing I remembered.

John looked at me and started laughing, "Oh my gosh! This is going to be fun!" as John began to tell the story where I left off. "Well, first of all, I was kind of distracted myself, but to make sure you didn't go in the water we brought you up to the bar and laid you on a chair. I stayed close to watch you. I only looked away for a minute. You were gone. I started freaking out and ran to the edge of the water and looked to see if you walked anywhere. Then I realized you must have been with Catalina somewhere. To make sure, I asked Dina to help me look for you. Dina was worried and asked everyone to help look for you guys too.

"Everyone started looking for you, when someone started to yell in Spanish, 'I see three moons!' and started howling like a wolf. We walked up to the top of the stairs onto the deck. As we reached the other side of the deck we looked over the deck down towards the beach. We saw two naked people. Nobody could take their eyes off. With the moon as bright as it was we could see half-naked bodies, but we couldn't see your faces. Everyone yelled when you and Catalina started getting it on like two snow bunnies. Dude,

it was really impressive. The way the moonlight struck her tight body!”

“Oh man! She was truly a moon goddess. You! Holy crap! You had this spear that could catch an 800-pound tuna. Forget that! You had a harpoon that could kill Moby Dick.” John placed his hand over his mouth and yelled, “There she blows! I was proud to be an American!” John said.

“Shut the hell up John! Quit playing with me.” I said. It must have been the angle of the moonlight I thought to myself.

John looked at me and said, “You want to hear the most messed up part? While you were going at it, we all heard a voice behind us yell, ‘What’s going on?’ ‘It was Catalina. Everyone was shocked! Who in the hell was down there? You staggered back to the bar naked and the lady stayed on the beach putting her clothes on. As people ran to see who this lady was, I grabbed your clothes and threw you in the car. Dina drove us back to the hotel. Dina helped you put your pants on and I carried you to your room.” ■■■

THE OTHER WEXLER SISTER

Jennifer Funez-Villalta



Like usual, my peaceful afternoon lunch was interrupted by hand-to-hand combat. There were three of them, three ill-tempered, bad-mouthed, savages. I couldn’t fight on an empty stomach though. As I looked at my meal to my rear, one of my foes had appeared in front of me. I lunged backward smashing the bottom of his jaw with the ends of my feet before catching myself on the ground and bowing my arms enough to push myself right side up again, and most importantly, right next to my sandwich. I scurried behind a wall, not from fear, but because the bread would get soggy. Chewing silently, I kept an ear up for their approach.

“Come out here coward,” one of them called, “we’re not done with you Jordan!” My head perked up. Jordan? That name caused 90% of my problems. I set my plate down as my hand began to tremble with anger.

“I’m not Jordan,” I snarled while emerging from behind the wall.

“Don’t try to pull that with me! I know you’re lying, you half-wit.” I sparked in front of him before he could finish, and stared straight into his eyes so that he could see the anger within mine. I jumped above him, grabbing his head on my trip down, and hurled him to the floor. I proceeded by rushing to a second opponent, crashing a heavy elbow onto their forehead, and causing them to drop.

“My name is Aliyah.”

“But you look just like Jordan,” the last of them stuttered, preceding a lowering to his knees.

“She’s my sister; I’m looking for her actually. Maybe you boys can help me out.”

“We don’t know where she is, we thought she was here, that’s why we started talking to you in the first place.”

“That’s not what I meant,” I paced forward and didn’t hesitate to meet his face with my knee for a swift knock out, “I need more supplies, I’ll be taking your stuff now.”

Chewing on my triumphant meal, I made my way to the next town on a newly acquired mode of transport; I would sell the valuables and use the money to aid my goal: Finding my sister. Usually I wouldn’t mind what she did, but it’s kind of hard to ignore considering every time I got a boyfriend he ended up being a lowly bounty hunter after the reward for my sis’s arrest. I wouldn’t say that incidents like these happened too often, but it was enough to get on my nerves. While picking food from my teeth, I noticed I was being followed.

It wasn’t abnormal to end up having an enemy tag along and wait until I stopped before they would ambush me. After going through so many, it just became second nature to sense when they were around. As the sun grew dimmer, I yawned and decided to get it all over with - make my camp, eat a meal, and experience a “surprise” attack. I always made sure to put on a show, you know, exclaim how tired I was, pretend to struggle setting up the tent, and verbally turn off my lights so that they can know when to attack. Right on cue, I could see a light shadow extending over my right wall. I calmly maneuvered to the entrance of my sleeping area as the intruder was peeling it open. Entering weapon-first, I found it almost unbearable not to take it from their unsteady hand and shoving them back. Stepping shakily, they regained their balance for a moment before I slid my legs in between theirs, causing their backwards collision with the ground. The air was shoved out of their lungs once they met the rocky floor, so I sat over them holding the lonely blade, initially meant for me, near the vital area on their neck. The moonlight revealed the features of a young man.

“What are you after?” I hissed while pushing the blade closer.

“What’s it look like? I’m trying to take you to my boss; I’ll move up once he sees that I’ve brought him Jordan Wexler.” I felt the vein on my head throbbing with irritation from another case of mistaken identity.

Too tired to correct him, I continued questioning.

"Who might your boss be? Where is he?"

"I'll never give that information up!" he yelled loyally. I lowered my eyelids midway before tossing him over, relaying his arm behind his back and tugging until he groaned in pain. "Okay, okay, I'll tell you. Just don't break my arm!"

I loosened my hold slightly while he found his words. "I work for D.O. and right now he's set up just a few towns over." My body twitched for a moment. D.O., Douglas Oliver, was well known in the criminally-ruled underworld; he had to know something about my sister's whereabouts. "I was on my way over there when I recognized you, and I thought I would take the opportunity. So here we are; you are pinning me to the ground, and I must say, I'm not complaining." My nose wrinkled in disgust, and I reacted with a dry heave before I tied him up to a nearby tree. When morning broke, I packed up my camp and left a knife near my amateur ambusher; he would probably take a while to cut himself free, but he'd get it eventually. I boarded my rocking, creaking, horse-powered cart and headed for the next town.

Once I arrived, I decided that I had to at least get some basic background on D.O. before I could even think of rampaging through his territory. The ideal way to get that was by talking to a rat; the only tricky part was finding one. It's harder than most would think; people tend to confuse them with an everyday thief or a common coward desperate for money, that's only partially true. Sure, they can seem like scum, but their line of work is one of the most dangerous, yet, rewarding. They infiltrate different gangs, mobs, and groups time after time and always return with valuable intel that they save and sell at gasp-provoking prices later. Due to the kind of clientele they deal with, they live everyday as alert as possible and remain well-trained in combat. Above all, everyone should remember that their main goal is gathering information for future use, even when someone is just talking to them, they watch for handicaps, habits, speech patterns, anything they can use. Not to mention, they won't hesitate to rat anyone out. I don't know who started the rumor that they were weak and cowardly, they probably did it themselves to get everyone off their dangerous scent, but it's far from the truth. They're irritating to locate though; they always leave an interpretive symbol in varying public areas with low population and higher criminal traffic. The most common spot is a men's bathroom in a hotel; it often reeks and there's always that one guy who thinks it would be funny to flash me. Just to be safe, I still thoroughly search through the women's before I enter the men's room. Three grueling hotel bathrooms, and one flashing later, I sat in a restroom stall and looked at the ceiling. I found it; a drawing that resembled a flower, in reference to a nearby meadow-themed cafe. Relieved, I decided to speak to this Rat as soon as I could.

The cafe seemed average, and I didn't need to go in to know where this person was; I noticed a single person sipping on a cup on the outside patio. I jumped over the railing and landed on the chair across from them. I sat face-to-face with a woman in a large sun hat.

"You do know you can enter through the front doors and make your way to this table like a civilized person," she advised, as the smoke from her drink rose to her face and shattered on the plumps of her lips; their shape and color resembled two slices of oranges.

"I've never been patient."

"So why would someone like you need to speak to a random woman at a cafe?"

"I need some information on two people: a woman named Jordan Wexler and a man nicknamed D.O."

"And what makes you think I would know anything about anybody?"

"It's your job to know. So how much is it for me to learn something about them?" I slid a bit of cash towards her hand.

She calmly placed her cup on top of the payment. "I don't know much about Jordan Wexler. I've only seen her once; I didn't even get a chance to talk to her, she just walked by me. Although there has been more talk about her recently, she does a good job hiding her whereabouts and anything else about herself," she leaned back into her chair, "so I can't help you there." She finally tilted her head up to look at me, her golden eyes widened. "Unless you have something to tell me," she investigated.

"I'm not Jordan."

"I know that already. You two are completely different people, how could I get you confused? You've got different eyes, there's a tattoo on your wrist, and just listen to the way you speak." These were refreshing words to hear; she merely compared the mannerisms between Jordan and me, and was quick to tell the difference. "I think it's safe to assume that you two are twin sisters, so I was hoping you would be able to tell me a little more about her."

"I don't think learning about her diaper rashes would help you too much; besides I already paid to get some info from *you*."

"Which we already established that I know little about," she added. I wasn't too surprised about this; I've heard it all before.

"What about D.O.?"

“Douglas Oliver, also known as D.O., is the twelfth leading distributor of drugs in the black market. He sells his product while under the guise of a traveling circus; constantly travelling to avoid the police. He tries to compensate for his feminine voice by building a dangerous reputation; this is what has driven him to be in such high criminal rankings. I can draw you up a blueprint of his facilities, but it's going to cost you extra, and it's a day's wait.”

“I guess I'll take it,” I sighed as I pulled out another payment. I dismissed myself and looked for something to do while I waited.

Skimming the area, I found a decent place to get a meal. It seemed all right until a group of idiots came stumbling in. When the waiter brought me my food, it got a little easier to ignore all the noise, but it didn't last long. Midway through my meal, I noticed from the corner of my eye, that they started a drinking and shoving match. Mixing unbalanced drunken men, pressure to push them around, and a crowded area was a bad idea that even children could understand, but these guys weren't capable of such high mental comprehension. One of them was nudged a little too hard, and I felt an added weight to my back as I was about to munch on a piece of cauliflower. The movement spread from my spine to the arm holding my fork, and crept up to my fingers. It tumbled to the ground and its edible exterior was replaced by a dark haze brought on by the germs that blanketed it. A husky laugh grew behind me. One of the men was looking over my shoulder and mocking my tragic scene. I threw a dirty look his way.

“Are you mad, little lady?” His question caused me to stiffen with readiness to attack, and all rationale left my mind; he noticed. “What? You want to fight?” I was tempted to, but the waiter interrupted - no fighting was allowed. The intrusion brought me back, I didn't want to draw any attention to myself and risk someone thinking I was Jordan, so I swallowed my pride.

“No fighting here. What can you do? Accidents happen,” I smiled innocently.

The man stood behind me and rubbed his nose with his alcohol-stenched hand. “We were just leaving,” he replied to the waiter without breaking focus on me. As soon as they were out the door, I made my way to sell all the unwanted items I had recently acquired; barely made anything though, the clerk was a scrooge. I stepped outside, completely focused on counting my money, just to double-check that it was all there. This habit has its pros and cons, sadly a con came up.

I suddenly felt a burlap sack slide over my head. I minimized my movement to get any clues as to who my captors were. I noted two holding each of my arms. Judging from the noise around me, there was another in charge of a vehicle nearby, two more just standing around keeping watch to my south and my east, and one leader to my north, bringing me to a total of six. Before long, the leader blurted a command, and in that moment, I knew who it was. It was the drunk from the restaurant. Since there were no waiters to stop us, I was pumped to beat him down and get revenge for his ridicule. I leapt backward, causing my holders to lose their balance. Once I landed on my feet, they were still holding on to me, so I used the force from my fall to push down and bring their heads together into one hit. As they let go of their hold, I pulled the sack off my head and circled around the guy behind me to snag him within it. The rest of the goons came to a halt. I immediately moved my sights to the leader in front of me. “I didn't know you could move like that, girly.”

“If you're impressed by that, then I guess I don't have to fight seriously.”

“The easier you make it to catch you, the better. Either way, we're taking you.” He made a small gesture, and I could feel his subordinate inching closer to my position. “D.O. will be very excited to add someone like you to the team, you could probably entertain him for a little while, but he does get bored easily.”

“D.O.?” I mumbled to myself. Allowing myself to get caught, was an ideal opportunity to infiltrate his area without worrying about raising too many alarms. I changed my defensive position from the subordinate so he could catch me freely. Just a few seconds after my decision, I felt the bag replaced over my head. To shrink any suspicion, I wiggled around enough for them to think that I was struggling.

“Bet you didn't see that coming,” the leader sang. “Make sure to tie her arms and legs too, she's a slippery one.”

I'd been in worst situations, but I could've done without the head covering. I was thrown into a carriage that was cramped with the clinking and clanking of alcohol bottles mixed with a cloud of men's cheap perfume. I sat up against one of the walls. The best thing for me to do was sleep until I got to the upcoming destination, but because these ruffians enjoyed their drinks and obnoxiously cacophonous laughter, that wasn't going to happen.

My head was in the clouds when we came to a spasmodic stop that caused me to fall over myself, and all my attention rung back to the situation as I was grabbed by the legs and dragged outside. I felt a heavy force on my stomach as someone chucked me onto their shoulder. The air outside was dry, strings of sunlight entered through the sack that enveloped my head, and every step that was taken just dug that shoulder further into my abdomen. The temper from the sun receded; implying we had entered a shaded area. Not too long afterwards, I was unloaded onto a stiff seat. There was constant mumbling and chattering of an overwhelming large group of people; more than I could keep track of by ear alone.

A single creak muted the room. The only sounds that remained were the echoes of steps crushing the dirt beneath them. The bag still shrouded over my eyes, but I didn't need my sight to realize that everyone was staring at D.O. as he entered the room.

"I think I've got something that you would love to add to your show here," began my kidnapper.

"That is something I will decide for myself," replied a slow, tenor voice, "what is so interesting about this girl?"

"Well she can do flips and tricks, so she can be entertaining." There was a momentary pause, I assume it was because he was waiting for a response, but he would never get it. "And if you don't want her for that, then we could always just make money from selling her," he added nervously.

"I suppose," D.O. finally sighed lazily, "Take that sack off her head; I want to get a better look at her face." When the burlap wall finally rose, I instinctively looked around. The walls were flimsy and tarp-like; concluding that a tent rested overhead. Below me, I noted that I was at the center of a large circle, edged by a white line. Props littered the floor, rings hung from the ceiling, and a tightrope stood nearby. I moved my attention forward. The dirt floor supported the weight of a massive set of wooden bleachers that D.O. and his co-conspirators sat on. D.O.'s identity was obvious because of how he centered himself within the group of men he was in. He tilted his head in analysis and he finally asked suspiciously, "Jordan?" ■ ■ ■

TO OCCUPY MY MIND

Heather Loomis

The moonlight in your eyes
Has at last extinguished
For there is complete darkness tonight
And all has been relinquished

None of the forces of nature
Can change what has been done
Keep the showers, cracks in your faults
And cease the rising flood

There is a greater radiance farther out
But it's so hard to find
When your crimes of passion never fail
To occupy my mind ■ ■ ■



UNA NOCHE CON UN VAMPIRO

Yasmin Ruiz

I sat on my bed and opened my laptop and logged into my Facebook account. I opened another tab and logged into Hulu. I grabbed my cup of Il Conte D'Alba by Stella Rosa from my nightstand and took a deep sip of the dark crimson wine.

Welcome back! It read: *Would you like to continue watching Sueño De Amor, Mi Corazón es Tuyo, Maria Del Barrio.*

"Oh God! You're turning me into a spinster!" She echoed through my thoughts, awakening from her 6-month slumber, as I felt the telenovela star in her raising her hand to her forehead as she proceeded to begin to faint and collapse onto the floor.

I could hear my mom's TV from my room. She was watching the baseball game.

"Pinches Dodgers! ¡Están ciegos o que!" My mom said "Damn Dodgers! Are you all blind or what?" She began to yell at the team as though she was the unpaid coach's advisor.

I looked at my computer screen undecided of which telenovela I wanted to watch, I hovered to towards *Mi Corazón es Tuyo*,

"Really the one about the stripper who becomes a nanny to the Mexican von Tramp family?" she asked.

It's von Trapp, and yes, we're going to do something I like for a change, I said. *It could possibly do you some good.*

Ping! I switched tabs to Facebook and saw a message window pop out.

Alex Ávila: ¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás?

Alex Avila: Hello! How are you?

Who the fuck is this? I thought.

"Well, click onto the profile link and find out stupid," she commanded.

I clicked to view his profile, I saw his profile picture and immediately felt a faint tequila-ridden nostalgia. I felt a rise of baby vomit beginning to build up at my throat.

"Oh! MY! GOD! Is that..." she began to say.

Oh yeah... It's him, the Vampire from Villanueva! I said.

"He wasn't to follow us back!" she stated.

US? There is no us! This is your doing! I said to her.

Alex Ávila: Ya tienes tiempo que no me hablas.

Alex Ávila: It's been a while since you've talked to me.

I felt his heavy breathing that came out from his mouth through my laptop screen. I could hear his disgusting laugh echoing into the semi-peaceful space of my thoughts.

"How the fuck do we get rid of this?" she said.

What are you talking about, there is no we! I scolded her, *this was all you! He followed you back!*

"Please help me then," she begged.

Okay fine! The only way to get rid of this vampire is by ripping out his confidence, but first I'm going to wine.

This is too much bull for one day, I said. I rose and raced down to my kitchen, opened my fridge and grabbed the full bottle of the Stella Rose.

Ping! Ping!

"Hurry up! He's not going to stop!" she said, as I poured myself a cup and drank it.

"Ganaron Los Dodgers! ¿Oyes que andas haciendo Chupitos?" my mother yelled out. "The Dodgers won! Hey what are you doing you little drunk?" My mother stood on the balcony that over looked the family room and the kitchen. I popped out the cork.

"Pues Celebrando Ama." I said "Well, celebrating, Ma."

"Bueno, pero no más lávame la copa que usas," she said "Okay, well just wash the wine glass that you use."

"Okay," I said, as I watched her go back into her room.

Ping!

I poured myself another cup, and I started to play Celia Cruz on my phone and began to dance as I took sips of her happy juice as I danced, and felt her fully take over.

We walked upstairs to my laptop and looked at the unread messages from the Vampire.

Alex Avila: ?

Alex Avila: ¿Cómo vas en tus estudios?

Alex Avila: How are you doing in school?

Alex Avila: ¿Oyes te acuerdas de la noche de la boda de mis tíos?

Alex Avila: Hey do you remember the night of the wedding of my Aunt and Uncle?

"Alright! Let me set the scene for you, just so I can build up your wit," she began to say, *"It was a beautiful outdoor, green field wedding reception under some gazebos, I mean besides the flies that would swarm the horrid dry food it was pretty cute, I drank about six shots of tequila, I took that shit like a champ too, and man those tequila goggles made this under bite, illiterate, not knowing who Anne Frank is, heavy mouth breathing, sloppy drool kissing chump look like a God, I took him out to the dark made out with him, he did look better with the lights off, he bit the shit out of me, on my right shoulder to be exact, because apparently I like it rough. Oh and I took your panties off and put it in his coat. RIGHT! IN! FRONT! OF! HIM! And that's how I got the big fist sized bruise. Oh and this bitch had the nerve to call us fat! I mean look at him!"* She said as we looked at his profile picture disgusted that his tongue was slightly coming out. *Like is this troll trying to be sexy or something?"*

I hit send.

Yasmin: ¡Hola Vampiro! Estoy bien gracias, no te hablado por que ando muy ocupada mis estudios en la Antonimia de El Hombre.

Yasmin: Hey Vampire. I'm good thanks! I haven't been able to talk to you, because I'm way too busy in my studies of Man's Anatomy.

Alex: ¿Porque me siempre llamas Vampiro? ¿Pues te arrepientas en conociendo me? Hehehe y porque no me estudiaste mi antonimia.

Alex: Why do you always call me vampire? Do you regret meeting me or what? Hehehe and why didn't you study my anatomy?

Yasmin: Me dejaste una mordida en mi brazo, so si me arrepiento de conocerte un chingon porque me tenía que quedar con mi hermano en El Paso por una semana, para que mis papas no miraran que su hija

casi se volvió en un Vampira. Y dije la Antonimia de un Hombre, y tú no eres uno.

Yasmin: You left a bite mark on my arm, so yeah, I do fucking regret meeting you, because I had to stay with my brother in El Paso for a week, so my parents wouldn't see that their daughter was basically a vampire. And I said a *man's* anatomy, and you are not one.

Alex: Pero lo querías, hasta me rogabas.

Alex: But you're the one that wanted it, you basically begged me.

Yasmin: Sí, pero un hombre nunca tiene que aprovecharse de una dama así,

Yasmin: Yes, but a real man would never take advantage of a lady like that.

Alex: Bueno si yo soy un vampiro, ¿tu que eres?

Alex: Well, if I'm a vampire, what does that make you?

I hungrily looked at my glass of blood red wine.

Alex: Tu y yo somos iguales, hambre por pasión y amor. ¡Tú me querías esa noche! No te olvides. Y si verdadero soy un vampiro, la mordida te hizo mi esclava.

Alex: You and I are the same, hungry for love and passion. You wanted me that night! Don't you forget it. And if I really am a vampire that bite made you my slave.

I felt my right arm with my left fingers, as I touched the soft scar that he gave me. I quickly closed my laptop, and laid on my bed. Drank the last bit of what was now my life source. Laid my body as I felt hungry for my new victim. ■ ■ ■

TIS DEATH THAT LIES

Makenzie Sparks



"Death defies all choices and fate,"

Said he, smiling far too late.

"Then destiny is death this night,"

Said she, straining for the light.

"Death is far to come, my dear,"

He replied, feigning no fear.

"Doth fate tell you so, sir?

For death this night may stir."

"Did destiny say so to my darling?

Stop this fearful mind crawling,

Through that I cannot shield,

But let me be here, please yield.

I will protect thee from her fear,

That of which no one may hear."

When a tear escaped her pale cheek,

She could hide no more what made her weak.

He smiled sadly and said, "Don't fret."

And she replied, "Life is but a debt,

Of which masks our fighting dread,

And brings this fateful death wed,

With her counterpart of life alight,

And will accompany us this night."

"Don't thou worry of the uncontrolled,

But keep in mind your earthly hold.

I am here for you. Do not be scared,

For I will see that you are well-fared."

She offered a sad smile and closed her eyes.

He cried and said, "'Tis death that lies." ■ ■ ■



mariposa

Estrella Mountain | Literary Review

Estrella Mountain Community College is pleased to announce the tenth issue of its literary journal, *Mariposa*. Featuring the creative writing and visual art of students from a variety of disciplines across the campus, *Mariposa* captures the collaborative spirit of students, faculty and staff and provides a creative outlet for the voices of our students.

For more information, contact the Estrella Mountain Division of Arts and Composition at 623-935 8444 and visit estrellamountain.edu/mariposa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who participated and assisted in the creation of this year's *Mariposa Literary Review* journal. Special thanks to our creative and technical contributors.

Awarding Judge

Mary Sojourner

Review Committee

Carlotta Abrams, Erin Blomstrand, Analicia Buentello, Rod Freeman, Ryan Horvath, Linda Keyes

Design

Michael Bartley

Editors

Michael Bartley, Amy Young

About Mary Sojourner

Mary Sojourner is the author of three novels: *Sisters of the Dream*, *Going Through Ghosts and 29*; short story collection, *Delicate*; essay collection, *Bonelight: ruin and grace in the New Southwest*; memoir, *Solace: rituals of loss and desire*; and memoir/self-help guide, *She Bets Her Life*. She is a 10-year National Public Radio commentator and was chosen as a Distinguished Writer in Residence in 2007 by the Virginia C. Piper Center for Creative Writing at Arizona State University.

She has been a community and environmental activist and organizer since she was 17, and teaches writing in private circles, one-on-one, and at writing conferences and book festivals. Writing is the most powerful tool she has found for doing what is necessary to mend – oneself and the greater world.

breakthroughwriting.net

estrellamountain.edu/mariposa



mariposa

Estrella Mountain | Literary Review

25th

ANNIVERSARY

ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



MARICOPA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES