



AXIS





An imaginary line to which elements of a work of art are referred for measurement.



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# Long Ago on a Shore too Far to Walk to [But Not Far Enough to Forget]

By: Ruth Esther Moreno

Traditions were left;  
Hanging from a palm tree  
By the warm waters and coconut drink.  
Traditions from the Delta of Nigeria  
And Coast of Barcelona,  
Of people unknown,  
Hanging from a palm tree.  
The warm smiles and loud beats of  
Dry skin on cylinders of wood,  
People dance around in circles  
Like praying to the wind or maybe to  
The land or for the suffering of years past.  
Twelve grapes for good luck and  
A sip of eggnog to drown the nostalgia  
Of the carcasses of dreams unrealized;  
Traditions left hanging from a palm tree  
Dress in new clothes and dance around with  
Suitcases to ensure travel in the upcoming year,  
Traditions left hanging from a palm tree.  
Left when I left the Caribbean and became an American,  
Left on the runway of a steel bird as I peered out the window,  
Ahh how I miss it!  
The warmth, the musty smell and crackling of pork cooking,  
the beams and plantains.  
The laughter, the joy, the non-stop dancing,  
The forgetfulness of the debt owed to the bank,  
The heat and the humidity.  
None matters in Navidad...  
All traditions left hanging from the palm tree.

Aus Der Traum  
By Meghan Martinez

The helicopter chop  
Of pigeon wings over my head  
Makes the bread in my hand  
Shake.

I wait  
For the sound of thunder.

By: Katheleen Ocampo

crys·tal·ized / kris-te-lisd/ V: 1. Translucent matter illuminated through static/ Hues immersed to combine DNA ribbons/ Connecting through symbols and shapes. 2. A vibrant explosion of uncertainty/ frozen artistry/ vivid pigments dance amongst a darkened screen/lightness/ swirls of captive anemone tentacles combining icicles/ psychedelic.

Onirismos Inconcretos

Alejandro Valencia

Painting



The sun's rays slowly breach the blinds of my trailer, creeping its warm touch over my cool face. I open my eyes opposed to the day, breathing out my distaste for the morning. I roll out of bed quickly; wiping away drowsiness as I walk to the shower. As I come out of the cramped shower space I stop and look in a mirror that hangs just outside the bathroom door. I look deep into my reflection hoping for some sort of answer to the questions that hold residence in my head, the questions that haunt me about my past and that don't let me get on with the future.

Unenthusiastically I begin to get ready for work, reaching for my blue jean overalls that have colorful patches covering holes almost to numerous to count. Slip on my mustard colored shirt and slowly slide one of the overall straps over my shoulder, put on my long red linoleum like shoes and walk back to the mirror. I look down at the small dresser beneath the mirror open the top drawer and scan the contents. Running my hand atop the contents slowly like untarnished treasures, stopping to run my index finger along the outlines of the carvings on an old dull pocket watch.

I reach for the small ebony box in the corner pull it out and close the drawer, then resting the box on top of it. I open the box to pull out a small foam triangle, which I dab against the pure white paint in one section of the box. Then begin to cover my face with it, observing my progress in the mirror. With a thin brush I paint my eyelids black with lines that extend up into my forehead, down into my cheeks, and into my temples. My lips also coated in black with lines protruding from the sides of my lips curving downwards. I take some Elmer's glue and start to pour it into

my hair molding the glue and hair into large individual spikes that stand out behind my head, I once again look deeply into this character's eyes, or to say my own before heading for the trailer door. Looking at the reflection of this persona that so gallantly veils who I use to be. Hiding away the man that worked so hard to achieve what he thought was success, only to ignore what was really the only thing that mattered.

Opening the door whatever silence was held in my shanty home was quickly overtaken by the loud cries of children begging for some kind of sugar, followed by the loud cries of parents telling them that they're going to rot their teeth, and the humming and clanking of old carnival rides that have probably taken more lives than Dr. Kevorkian. The crowds are smaller these days, due to children in the area going missing recently. I pass by a black and white flyer of one of the missing children, a smiling little girl her brilliant smile shimmering like star light. Her colorless face still radiates innocence, the memory of a life that could've been, should've been, but didn't get the chance.

I walk over to Gus's trailer and knock on the door, "What?" he grumbles from inside.

"It's Will." I replied calmly.

The door swung open he squinted at me wrinkling his forehead even further than what his age has done, while scratching his stomach that protruded from his sweat stained white shirt like a yellow tinged hill. Then slowly grinning patted me on the shoulder.

"What the hell's the hold up? How long does it take you to put on that face?" He smugly muttered.

"Sorry" I reply with a sarcastic smile, "my regular show time?"

"Yup, come on in and let's get you loaded up." Gus smiled and put his fat stubby arm around

me guiding me through the door. Walking behind into the trailer I watched as his short pudgy body would sway with every step. His frizzy ashen colored hair thinning on the top, and shooting thin strands all about like a wire brush. It felt as if I was following some kind of monster into his lair. Gus's trailer was like a black hole of junk; whatever was in your grandma's attic that she didn't want, found its way to Gus. Today a small gold engraved chest caught my eye; I had never seen that in Gus's place before nor anything of such value in here.

"Hey Gus, what's in the pretty box?" I asked while raising an eyebrow. He slowly looked down at it and didn't say anything for a second, he turned back around and pulled out two wooden cages with three chickens in each one.

Then with a serious look on his face turned to me and said,

"That my boy is Pandora's box." And proceeded to hand me the chickens.

"Pandora's box?" I asked perplexed having not expected this response.

"Something's are better left a mystery, let's leave it at that." Gus turns and opens the door.

I stared at the gleaming box for a couple of seconds before exiting out; it's glare calling for my hand to open it. Or maybe it's just my own

Float Graveyard  
Rachael Walke  
Photography



curiosity. As I walked to my tent I got the usual stares and comments. Little girls holding on tightly to their mother's legs in fear, little boys telling their mothers they wanted my hair much to her dismay. And there it was my tent, The Creepshow.

As I pass through the entry way of the tent, my body becomes enveloped by the cool absence of light. Walking down the dimly lit path I pass the first station, Milo the Incredible Fish Boy. He waves at me as I pass by, his body glimmering beautiful shades of blue and gold acrylic paint under the fluorescent

lights of his tank. But under his brilliant acrylic skin is just a boy; a fragile boy. Who wonders why he had to be born with gills and webbed hands and feet? Why his parents were so horrified of him? Why couldn't they have had the same compassion the nun had that found him in a dumpster crying? Why was he destined to be a dumpster baby?

Next I walk by Cyrus, the Man with the Indestructible Stomach. As he arranges the shards of glass and metal bolts that he will soon feast upon he glances up at me and gives me a half grin. What do people assume he is thinking while chewing on glass? While blood sneaks from the sides of his mouth, would anyone think he is



picturing his deceased wife? That the tearing of flesh is nothing compared to the pain of finding his wife in a bath tub full of blood. Both wrists slit open like a torn doll. After three miscarriages she became broken, and Cyrus was unable to put her back together. Did they name the babies? Should you name the babies? Cyrus now lives substituting one pain for another, why is he destined to live this way? All these people care about anyway is the show. These are a couple of the stories Gus has told me about the others, I usually get him to talk to avoid the subject of myself.

I take my place near the center of the tent. I prepare my station placing the cages upon a small table I have next to my stool. I take a seat and wait for the first group of people to come by. As they approach I take some deep breaths then take a seat on the stool and bow my head down so to hide my face. When they are standing directly in front of me I begin.

“Hello ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Azreal’s den looks like you’re just in time for my feeding.” As I slowly give the audience a grin, I pull out one of the live chickens from the cage. I hold it up high for all in the group to see, and as their faces grow more confused I face the chicken towards me. And then swifter than shadows, I shove its head completely into my mouth, and bite down as hard a vise severing its head into my mouth. As screams and groans fill the tent I once again hold up the chicken, this time a headless body flapping its wings uncontrollably and trails of blood trickling down my chin; this the last thing they see before moving on. I’m thinking just five more to go as I spit the head into a bucket. All the while still thinking about that box in Gus’s trailer, what could possibly be in it. After my set I shuffle back to my trailer jump in the shower cleansing my body of paint and chicken blood. Watching black, white, and red

swirls circling by my feet as the water runs down the back of my head; reminding me of Sunday afternoons at the merry-go-round. I finally lay down for bed, my head still trying to unlock the contents of the box.

The next morning I waited for old Gus to leave the trailer and go on his early morning quality control run of the park, and when he did I nervously climbed in through a window on the side of the trailer. I snuck in quietly as possible and made my way to the box. It shimmering amongst the clutter calling to me, to unearth whatever contents fill it. I steady my hand and bring it closer; standing directly over it I begin to slowly open the lid. I close my eyes for a second before revealing the contents to myself.

The box is filled with locks of hair. Each one individually wrapped with beautifully colored bows; reds, blues, pinks, yellows, purples and so on. I pick up a locket of auburn colored hair; it’s light and soft and shines in a reddish tint amongst the light. I can feel the blood cooling in my veins, my heart slowing to a disappearing pace.

I quickly put it in my pocket and storm out of Gus’s trailer running back to my own. I burst through the door like a runaway train, and head straight for my drawer. I pull it open and grab the pocket watch, I open it up and from inside of it pull out a lock of my murdered daughter’s hair. I hold her auburn hair close to my face admiring its reddish tint against the light in between my tears.

Collapsing to the floor his voice sneaks up behind me, “So now you know,” Gus muttered softly.

I can’t speak.

I can’t move.

Can’t breathe.

“I told you kid, its Pandora’s box.” Gus spoke in a manner grimmer than I have ever heard before. And before I could even muster a word I feel the keen touch of steel sliding across my throat. The floor under me painted in my life.

And here I thought I was a monster.

## ***Shattered***

***By: Jessica Maria Fiallo***

***Fading in, fading out,***

***Bless the pills that I***

***choke down.***

***There’s no more to say.***



## ***Mirror of the Subconscious***

***By: Marie Jacques Seignon***

***Skin color of dark chocolate, hair like dried  
black pepper seeds; she always wanted to look  
like her cousins, vanilla skin and arm length  
hair.***

***It has been two months since her complete  
alopecia.***

***Some blame her dangerous mixture of hair  
potions, but she was back at it again.***

***Scrubbing and massaging pomade mixtures  
on her scalp, one could easily single out the  
different components of what she said to be a  
secret recipe.***

***Concoctions bought at the flea market, pieces  
of “bwa pin”, onion, lemon, cinnamon, mashed***

(shadow face)





Alive

By: Stephanie Diaz

*When I dig into the recesses of my memory, my grandfather appears in his younger years, leukemia-free and mowing the grass that grew too long in the summer. Sometimes I can trace the fine wrinkles on his forehead as if they had just been carved into his face. Tiny rivers carrying the sweat of years hauling furniture in and out of a warehouse. I can lift the grey clouds from his hazel eyes and he can see the world as it was before time began consuming him. My grand father is chopping coconuts by the shed. He is unaware that his veins dangle like roots from his heart, dripping with an invisible illness. Already degrading, throb-*

A Stroll to the Corner Store

By: Kathy Buckner

She strolls down the street to get vitamin D to help strengthen her bones.  
Too much sun on that body will destroy her tan.  
She loves her smooth dark skin.  
All the neighbor's love her –  
she's never too busy to walk down the street and talk to them.  
If times get bard, she can be a victim.  
She believes that locks are made for honest folks,  
not for thieves.  
She's quick to help the neighbors out – she never stop giving  
to those living on the streets – part time.  
Some of her neighbors stay under he trees all day—  
that makes her question—  
what the pastors are doing with all the money?

She has grown kids now; one is no longer with her.

Most days are happy days with a lot to worry

about.

Oh, how she loves men, old age can't make that flame go out.

Working drawers or sexy drawers—

That's one of the problems she has every day.

Never a dull moment around her;

For most days she wears sexy drawers,

Walking down the street with

a skip in her step and a big smile on her face;

her head held high as she thinks

that she can support her habits.

While walking down the street, a young man asked for a cigarette,

she says, "Do you know the price of cigarettes?"

I think that every man needs to support his own habit."

She loves her beer,

cigarettes, and lotto tickets.

She hopes to get rich one day

and give everybody a little of something.

She never stops talking once her

great grandchildren are in her arms—

"Grandma"—nothing

sounds better than that.

***Marriage on Hold***

***By: Christine Ogaza***

***On November 12, 1961***

***Abuela and Abuelo married in San***

***Cristobal, Cuba,***

***Only together for a few months,***

***The government of Cuba crept around***

***Looking for my Abuelo, after***

***He set off a bomb in a bank***

***And word spread like wild fire.***

***His name was whispered by many,***

***Especiallly by one of his partners.***

***Being an anti-revolutionary meant he***

***Would be chased till his death,***

***Hiding himself in another city***

***With a glistening shaved head saved him,***

***Till' he came to America on a Lancha***

***Like many, he feared the Coast Guards***

***Who caught him on his way over,***

***Begging to stay in America***

***He surrendered himself to the army***

***Preparing for war and living today as a***

***Veteran,***

***In Cuba, Abuela lived with her brother***

***Who was sent to prison, years of torture***

***Would be too much to think of,***

***So he escaped and swam till he reached new***

***Found land,***

***Becoming the first Cuban man to swim to***

***Guantanamo Bay, he was finally free.***

***Diana Santiesban***





El cobarde (The Coward)  
by Jessica Alvarez

The soldados came in the morning,  
sporting light blue uniforms and carrying a list of  
names.  
“Medina!” They yelled,  
but nobody answered.

On his door, they wrote “cobarde”.

At dawn, Medina had gone to the port.  
He hid in a barrel and waited for the morning  
sun.  
The year was 1898; the place was Spain.  
He was hungry,  
he was nervous,  
he was 18 years old.

On his door, they wrote “cobarde”.  
Scared, uncertain, and lonely, Medina fled his  
homeland in a barrel.  
He traveled long days in the Atlantic and ended  
in Cuba.  
He escaped; he was alive.

On his door, they wrote “cobarde”.

A fruit picker, a farm worker, a handy man,  
but never a “brave” man.

On his door, they wrote “cobarde”.

The coward outlived la guerra, but not the  
struggle.  
The coward survived the hard labor;  
the hot and humid days in the farms.  
The coward started a family;  
the coward never looked back.

On his door, they wrote “cobarde”.

On his deathbed, Medina heard the crickets,  
sharply chirping in a warm summer night.  
He felt the waves of the Atlantic.  
He felt the spirit of la finca.

He felt la furia roja in his heart, in his blood.  
He heard the soldados yelling his name.  
He felt tears coming down his eyes.  
He felt alone.

El cobarde is my roots and my past.  
El cobarde was my great-grandfather.

My Mother’s Eyes  
By Claudia I. Gonzalez

My mother’s eyes are yellow.  
They give way to her worried mind,  
How for years she has stayed inside,  
So my dad, brother and I can have a life.  
She does not cry, scream, or smile.  
Always tired, but she never sleeps.  
She works until she forgets about her lost  
dreams.  
The constant moving from place to place,  
And giving life has stolen her health.

My mother’s eyes are yellow.  
They show me what she really feels.  
I sometimes think she doesn’t love me,  
Since affection from her is non-existent,  
But when she looks at me I see how wrong I am.  
Her eyes pierce me with a mother’s concern,  
I realize she doesn’t need to hug me to know she  
loves me,  
All I need is to look at her eyes.

My mother’s eyes are yellow.  
They show me her fears.  
She hopes I don’t end up like her,  
At home, depending on her husband,  
Having the need of the government’s food  
stamps,  
And with a Cuban master’s degree she can’t use  
here.

My mother’s eyes are yellow,  
And past her worried gaze,  
I see she’s proud of me.  
Through them I can understand  
what she can’t explain with her words.

I love my mother’s yellow eyes.



Jesus was relaxing with a beer today. Leaning against the lamppost of La Tienda de la Esquina, he began to ponder about what was going on with his life. He decided to list his flaws first, since that was something he would always do before taking a decision from the time he was a kid, and he certainly was facing one of the biggest choices in his life.

Jesus was a Failure. At age 24 he couldn't deal with facing his father. After losing a valuable scholarship back in engineering school, and flunking out of a position at the airport's hangar, he had become pretty aware of his progenitor's wordless disappointment. Jesus had the terrible insecure personality to match.

After finishing his second beer, Jesus decided to start thinking about the good things he had; He knew he was cool, no, he was very cool, he se la vacilaba, because one is obviously cool when one has two girls to pick from. And when one has two girls, one doesn't give two craps about disappointing no one's parents.

On one hand, there was Rosa, a shy girl from the San Jose Barrio who was training to become a seamstress. She'd met Jesus when he went to her house to have her mom fix his ripped stained pants. After flirting for a while, it didn't take long for Jesus to realize that Rosa liked him, and for Rosa to give in to his advances. On the other hand was Maria, from the San Felipe Barrio, an ambitious young lady full of audacity and promise, who had studied and was already working at a paying job.

Jesus knew that he was nothing in the eyes of Maria, but he knew he had something that she definitely desire...

\*\*\*\*\*

Don Raphael looked at his reflection on the mirror as he shaved his beard and trimmed his robust mustache. He was an uptight man brought up like in the older times, Hard-working and very formal. As he washed his razor, Raphael affirmed to himself that he had made no mistake; he had married, he obtained an amazing job that allowed him to travel once in a while, he had raised four children

in a nice house in the middle of the Barrio Lucero. Did he even do anything wrong?

Raphael learned that one of his sons had made a woman pregnant from his wife Leonor the day before. The news didn't surprise him as much a Leonor expected, since he knew that his son was bound to mess up again sooner or later. Raphael raised his sons as real Hombres: they were supposed to act like honorable individuals, yet, it seemed like his sons had absorbed nothing; no moderation, no discipline, and no class at all. Raphael was starting to have doubts.

Raphael then considered the other side of this relationship with his children. He was always traveling, so his time with them was somewhat limited. Raphael always beat them up with a correa every time they acted mischievously =, and he had always been slightly distant. Raphael realized he had never embraced his sons, but that wasn't a manly thing to do, no, that couldn't have been his mistake, Raphael finished grooming himself and went to have breakfast with Leonor.

\*\*\*\*\*

Rosa contemplated her mistakes in the darkness of her house's bathroom. She had fallen for a man against her mother's wishes, she had given herself to this man, and she was now waiting for a child. Jesus gave her a handful of money as he said "Sacatelo", He told her that she had to get rid of it. She agreed.

After all, Rosa knew that she did not have any other option; her family would throw her to the streets if she gave birth, and Jesus was now with a wealthier woman from San Felipe. Rosa clenched her teeth as she took a taxi to the abortion clinic, money in her hand, tears in her eyes, and something warm forming in her gut.

As she entered the seedy medical place, a stout figure rose from the chairs and approached her. He introduced himself as Don Raphael and told her to stop.

\*\*\*\*\*

Somewhere in Lucero, Jesus and his father were finally facing each other. Musica de Carnaval was playing in the background, Jesus had a beer bottle in his hand, the other one was in his pocket,

several other bottles laid at his shoes. Raphael stared at him coldly.

"Y entonces, que vas a hacer ahora?" Raphael said finally, attempting to break the tension.

"Me voy." Jesus answered.

Jesus had decided to take the easy way out, if he was going to choose, he would go for the safe bet. He was going to stay with Maria, who was now pregnant too, but he was going to work in "Los Estados Unidos," leaving thanks to one of his old acquaintances from the Airport, who helped him to get the proper documentation to go away. he was not ready to be a father yet.

Knowing that true men are not cowards, and that his son had made some awful choices, Raphael told his son that he just couldn't leave like that. He looked at Jesus in the eyes, realizing that he had raised this man who was about to leave two children behind.

"Don't worry papa, I will send 'em money"

Their identical moustaches remained staunch as the wind blew through the streets of Lucero.

\*\*\*\*\*

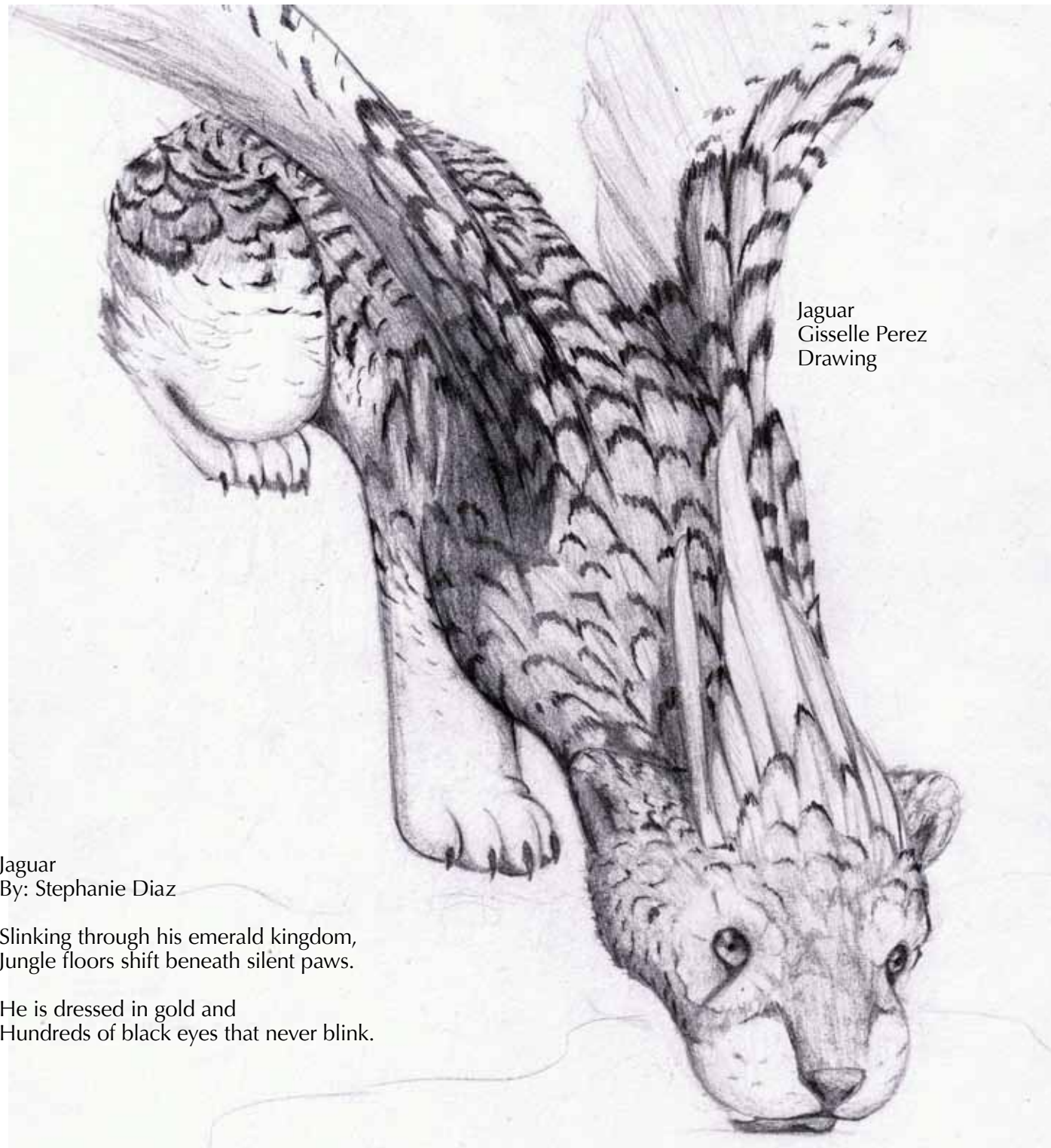
One child was named Jesus to remind his father of his unfinished obligations.

The other was named Raphael the name of his grandfather who loved him and allowed him to live.

Un Pordiosero en Nueva York  
Alejandro Valencia  
Painting







Jaguar  
By: Stephanie Diaz

Slinking through his emerald kingdom,  
Jungle floors shift beneath silent paws.

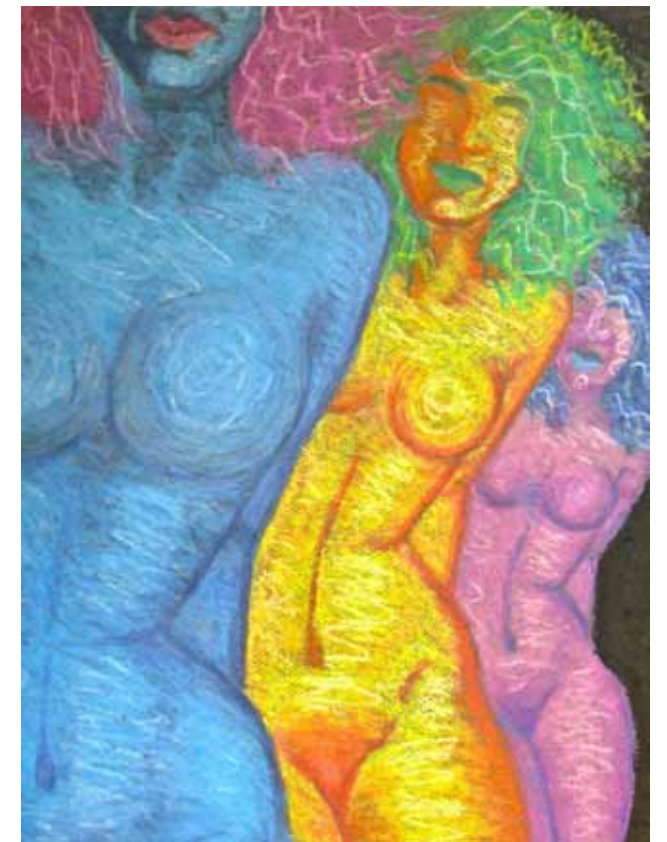
He is dressed in gold and  
Hundreds of black eyes that never blink.

Autumn  
By: Stephanie Diaz

Creeping red hues choke

Shivering leaves, dressing trees

In shades of sunsets.



The Cycle of the Forest  
By: Eduardo Mederos Jr.

Black leaves fall on the ground,  
Turning to ash as they land.  
Trees are scorch and destroyed,  
While flowers have been burned to nothing.  
Cruel flames ravaged the once beautiful, lush forest  
To a black, smoking desert.  
In the land of cinders,  
Stood a small tree that's full of life.  
The tree will give birth to the lush forest anew,  
And the cycle will repeat.

Animalia  
Alejandro Valencia  
Painting





Magic  
By: Stephanie Diaz

They swam in tiny swarms, ribbons of silver and gold twisting and bending beneath the shallow water where my feet swung. Sometimes, if I was still enough, they peered from their shadowy hiding place and ventured beyond my looming shadow and into the water that had turned a dusty yellow. Other times, a sudden movement caught them by surprise and like a carefully timed orchestra, the group of minnows leaped out of the shallows, two or three at a time, and landed back with barely audible ‘plops’. In the most brilliant of nature’s microscopic displays, hundreds of water-slick scales would catch the sunlight, suspended mid-air for less than a second in their frantic leaps from the water. Flickering, they resembled dewdrops catching the morning sun. I imagined someone standing over my place above the water, tossing fistfuls of glitter as they floated gracefully to the surface, disappearing once more into the shallows. I held a front-row seat, and I secretly hoped I was the only one who witnessed the show.

Creeping upward from where I crouched above the shallows of the sea was a trail of over-grown weeds that ate the slope and lessened the incline downward. At the very top, my grandmother overlooked the blue expanse, beaming. She squinted against the sunlight, calloused hands on her hips, and at that moment she resembled a pirate who had conquered some far off land. That far off land was, in reality, a very small island-like protrusion jutting out from where the two bridges split and ran side by side along the crystal waters. They fought for territory of the sea, but at last, the older structure watched solemnly as its replacement was built right alongside its weathered ledge. Copper wires jutted out from the broken asphalt and the sea spray ate away at its foundation. It watched over our “camp site”, gazing down at the congregation of loud creatures who had driven over one hundred miles from the bustling city. No one ever stopped on the “island” on their way to Key West, yet there we were, a strange sight to behold as the older members of the

family hurried to pitch the tent while there was still ample daylight left. I watched the sun sink beneath the miniature structures of Old Key West in the distance, leaving behind a radiating trail of blood-red columns that stretched into the sky and darkened into faded blues and purples.

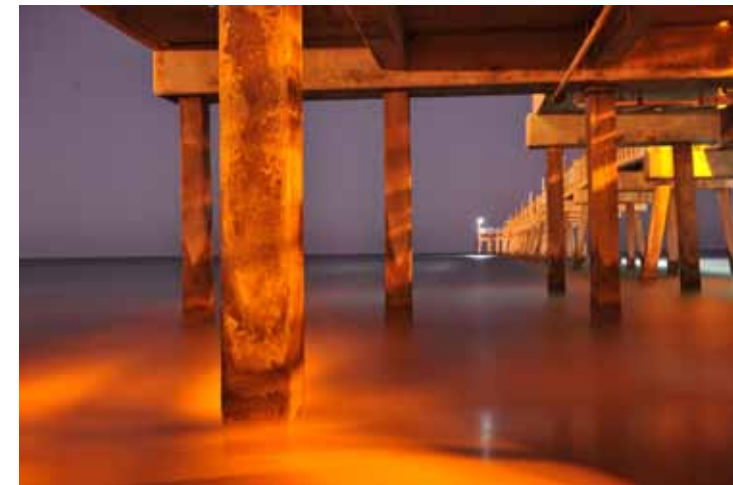
The air was heavy with the smell of mayonnaise and ham pressed into large rectangles of Cuban bread. It hung around our island, a ghost that crept into the tent and inched its way down the slope and to the shallows of the sea. My grandmother, always ready with a resonating laugh gathering behind her thin lips, sat on a worn-out beach chair at the foot of the tent. Her eyes were closed, and her hands folded at the curve of her stomach which slowly rose and sank. She was thinking of her home country, I thought, a large island that floated in the sea about 90 miles from our very spot beneath the bridge. She was painting the palm trees with their auburn shrines of coconuts in her mind, imagining the crystal blue water pooled at her feet back when she was a small girl splashing by the shore. The aunts sat a few feet away, leaning into each other to share a secret or two, the same aunts who had favored a day at the spa rather than a camping trip to some “middle of nowhere” patch of land by a run-down bridge. Gossiping in their hushed tones around the kerosene lamps, they were young again.

Lined against the ledge, only visible by their corresponding shadows splayed before the kerosene lamp, the uncles cast their silvery lines into the depths. They resembled cobwebs in the dark, twisting into each other as they caught the light of the lamp. Every ten minutes or so, words of advice would be exchanged, but nothing ever disturbed the silence. A strange calm captured our “camp site” and the bustling energy of the city seemed farther than the hundred miles we traveled from the mainland. Time slowed, and I knew we were in sync with the sluggish roll of time over the sleepy island.

The water beneath the place where my feet swung had turned a grayish-purple, a less brilliant shade of the hues that covered the canvas of space. I

couldn’t recall the exact time it had changed from its familiar golden yellow warmth, nor could I have recalled exactly when the golden sky was replaced with a million tiny orbs of light, suspended in space. Secretly, I didn’t care. There was a “magic” in the silence. Not the obvious and predictable pull-a-rabbit-out-of-a-hat kind of magic, but the sort that just hung between the trees and the over-grown weeds that led to our “campsite”. It was in the wind and in the water, and it was what made the kerosene lamps resemble massive lightning bugs in the dark. It was in the calm of my grandmother’s heaving chest as she painted scenes of her childhood onto her closed lids, and in the soft ‘plop’ of the fishing lines as they entered the water. Time had stopped for my loud Cuban family on our island protrusion. I knew there was the same sort of magic in them too; a connection that bound us to each other and to this place, however insignificant it seemed to have been before. The stars filled the darkness before us, fighting for space in the crowded expanse, and for a brief moment they resembled the tiny minnows in the shallows, flickering in the sun’s light like an orchestra of silver and gold in the quiet darkness.

Bliss  
Chris Buchanan  
Photography



Hit Me  
By: Rachael Walke

Deal Me in.  
Smile, 9 of hearts.  
Cry, 10 of spades.  
Laugh, jack of diamonds.  
Yell, king of clubs.  
This is the hand I'm dealt.  
Hit me.  
Cold Shoulder, 2 of clubs.  
So this is how it's gonna be.  
You shuffle the deck all the time,  
And have me come up short.  
You're waiting,  
Probably to see what my next move is,  
But even I don't know.  
How can you entice me,  
pull me in to play?  
I start to care;  
Then you push me away,  
I lose my chips.  
Shuffle the deck again,  
Deal out your hypocrisy.  
Make me get involved.  
Then pull that ace of spades for yourself.  
That spear,  
Penetrates our bond.  
Am I playing by the rules?

Tick-Tock  
By: Jessica Maria Fiallo

"Give me five minutes,"  
Says the voice behind the door.  
I can't stop shaking.





Columbine  
By Whitney Blucher

Opening the clasp with a snap,  
Tiny wheels roll the rusted drawer about.  
Insides filled with papers and broken tack,  
Manila envelopes browned with dew,  
Painted with silver webs and dusty fingerprints.  
The air hangs thick with the stench of decay—  
Skeletal remains of students past.

Grew to Love Her  
By: Mercedes Maduro

I am 1 day old and she loves me.  
Her first girl but number 3.  
I have no idea about her,  
I know nothing about my mother.

I am 7 and I am in the second grade.  
My teacher is on a tirade.  
I am left handed and she wants me to be right,  
To the rescue mom is there ready to fight.

I am 13 and I am into everything artistic;  
Drawing, writing, painting, even music.  
But I have a temper and it has gotten me into  
trouble.  
Once again she is there helping me after my stumble.

I am 16 and we have completely grown apart,  
I tell her I hate her and I can see it has broken her  
heart.  
I have said the words that children should never say,  
I have come to regret them even to this day.

I am 17 and just can't wait to leave home.  
I want to experience life and be out on my own.  
I graduate from high school with honors and it  
makes my mom cry;  
Then, it was the weirdest thing ever but today I  
understand why.

I am 18 and starting the first year of college away;  
I have a four-year scholarship but still can barely  
afford to stay.  
Mom doesn't care; she willingly puts herself in debt.  
The night she left I sat in my room and wept.

I am 21 and still going to school full-time.  
Not to my academic goal yet, but enjoying the  
climb.  
And with every step there is my mother,  
Through many difficult days I have grown to love  
her.





My Brother's Gift  
By: Ruben Aguilar

On my eighth birthday,  
mom bought me dressy shoes  
heavy, brown, one size too large;  
said I'll grow into them.

I wished to wear them then,  
my present, my shoes, my birthday.  
I felt older with them on,  
would impress my brother's friends,  
hang with them after school,  
not be sent to my room  
while the older boys played.

Before dinner, I wanted ice cream,  
Colombian, homemade, passion fruit,  
made by the lady five streets over,  
ice cream parlor in a bedroom,  
windows open to serve pedestrians;  
her request was to bring one's own  
bowl to carry more than one scoop.

I was eight, couldn't go alone, yet.  
My mom forced my brother  
to walk me there, older, smarter,  
the despot of my life, my parent  
when mom and dad weren't looking,  
the one who searched my book bag,  
asked if I had brushed my teeth (even  
checked the toothbrush for moisture).

I crossed the street, opposite to him,  
crossed it again if he came near me,  
ran if he threatened to tell on me.  
He bought and carried the ice cream.

I let him walk next to me.

The heavy shoes were loose, tapping  
my heels as I lifted them up, arched  
foot; grown-man socks helped my  
shoes slip off momentarily, the way  
my brother's old shoes fit me when  
I wear them to church on Sunday.

I kicked off my shoes as I walked,  
wanting to see how far they could go,  
running to chase them in the dark.  
The thrill lingered in my stomach,  
upset my brother. He commanded me  
to stop throwing the new shoes,  
to him, shoes I didn't deserve.

He would never hit me in the streets.

I kicked them higher and farther,  
hit a few branches twice; more thrilling  
than waiting for them in midair; more  
offensive to my brother, voicing what  
my parents would do to me if they knew.

I kicked one shoe higher and farther  
than what I really meant to. The fence  
won the shoe (not its birthday).  
My brother refused to go around to find it,  
blamed the ice cream, the warm evening,  
continued walking his dictated path.

I stomped the streets, pounded the pavement,  
broke branches, dragged my remaining shoe,  
leaned all my weight on the sewer drain cover,  
clanks and thuds, sliding with my body.

My brother continued his path home.

Metal sewer crate rattled, startled alive  
echoed, beat through the new night,  
interrupted by my screams and cries,  
as my leg slipped in, just halfway.

I pushed my way up, tugged at my foot;  
the ankle swelling, my strength inadequate,  
the foot now one size too large to fit through  
(even to wear my shoe if I ever found it).

My brother, stronger, older, could not  
pull my foot through, left me, ran home.

Dad would know what to do.

My brother ran, turned the corner.  
I closed my eyes, imagined his task,  
ran with him: He wasn't a runner,  
kept at his pace, past the houses,  
the one with the broken tree, low branches,  
bright orange; the one with a  
terrorizing poodle, named terremoto (earthquake)—  
I would click a branch on the metal railing to  
rile him up and spit in his eye—  
the small pharmacy that sells chocolate lollipops  
and dyed chickens.

Was it too late to make another wish?

I imagined my brother home,  
my eyes still shut, (people talking  
on the other side of the street);  
thought about my brother  
talking to my dad about my foot,  
begging him to hurry, to save me.

My brother and my dad,  
running to rescue me— in my mind.  
I wished my dad would tell me  
to open my eyes, I'm safe.  
My eyes reflected an empty street.

Had my brother really gone for help?

I stood up, slanted, one foot shorter,  
attempted to walk away unchained,  
sewer crate following me,  
clinging to my foot,  
knocking leaves down,  
leaves that had collected rain and dirt,  
leaves that the crate had watched and  
suppressed since spring.

My brother came first, running,  
screaming, announcing dad;  
sat next to me, apologized  
for dropping the ice cream.

I thanked him.

My Motivation  
By: Chelsea Fernandez

Reynaldo went to a rough school,  
Sat in the same rickety desk everyday,  
Until an African American girl took it from him.  
He hated her unreasonable attitude,  
Like the rage from his father,  
Which made him numb to an inch thick belt.  
Her threats developed with a pencil, and  
She jabbed it into his thick skin.  
He didn't cry,  
He just found himself in the principal's office,  
"Why did you hit her?"

His Tia gave him a chain for his birthday,  
Reynaldo rarely got gifts.  
He was walking home from school one day,  
And felt that stare,  
And heard the low rumble,  
And the rolling rubber sticking to the street.  
Dressed in black,  
They hunted for what they lacked.  
Reynaldo grabbed a rusted pole from a torn fence,  
He dragged it along the chain link,  
And foamed at the mouth,  
While yelling profanities.  
It must have been the lead pencil running through  
his veins,  
But they ran.  
He chuckled to himself as he wiped the spit from  
his lip.  
He never wore the chain again.

Reynaldo ran his own business,  
He trimmed and snipped the dead things,  
And his thick skin turned to callous.  
The green grew to make smiles for others,  
Unlike the events he experienced.  
Time helped his heart warm for an alluring woman.  
And she opened his eyes to new,  
This is my father.

Welcome to America the Land of Opportunity  
By: Monica Suarez

My mother always told me,  
"Dios es misterioso, pero siempre esta a tu lado."

I was 18 and pregnant when I escaped.  
My husband was a political prisoner.  
I didn't plan it,  
The opportunity simply presented itself.  
I said to my brother, the only one I had left at least  
"Today is the day!"  
Libertad at my fingertips.

Thirteen of us,  
One raft, one dream,  
Leaving our histories where they belonged  
In the past.

We were a lucky bunch, arriving in new land with-  
out dying.  
My aunt and uncle never made it in their attempt—  
My four-year-old cousin didn't either.  
The first glimpse made it all worth it,  
Tierra.

At last I felt the ruggedness and sharpness of the  
rocks at my feet.  
It was a good kind of pain.  
All I kept thinking was, "You can do this, for your  
baby, for your husband."  
I swiftly made it up the steep mountain of rocks,

Not a soul in sight,  
But my wet salty skin would give me away if any-  
one saw me.  
I made it to a main road,  
And that was the beginning of my new life.

"Peasant Man Carrying the World-  
Homage to the Working Class"  
Alejandro Valencia





From Our Bed  
By: Nikki Baker

From our bed,  
I can hear  
THE BANG  
Of a train  
On some distant track  
And I can hear a helicopter flutter pass.  
I can hear early birds  
Whistling, from the lines near the street.  
I can hear my heartbeat.  
I hear a man on the freeway speeding home to his  
wife  
And I hear the music he blasts to get his conscience  
right  
I can hear the clock say, "IT'S BEEN AN HOUR  
SINCE THREE".  
And I just heard a dog howl "WHERE IN THE  
WORLD CAN HE BEEEEEE?"

Now, I hear  
THE PAIN  
Of a lonely train  
Banging on the tracks.  
I wonder who else hears it.  
Who else's tears are like this?  
The walls cringe as I begin to weep,  
And now a voice inside me whispers "GO TO  
SLEEP".

Now, his car muffles down in the drive  
And now a crack and slam of the door.  
He BANGS around outside then has the audacity to  
come in.  
I hear the sheets rustle as he pulls at them to touch  
my skin.  
He falls asleep quickly,  
As his position and breathing change.  
Now, I hear THE PAIN  
Now its just some old train  
Dragging on the track.

Faithfully  
By: Rachael Walke

"Linda's the one!  
I'm a changed man."  
Lie!

"I'll be faithful."  
With other women.  
"Debbie's the one!"

Doesn't that make her two?  
"I love her!"  
Lie, lie!

"I was wrong."  
Of course.  
"Kristin's the one!"

Actually number three  
"I've grown up."  
Lie, lie, lie!

"I'll be honest,  
I was stupid.  
Linda was always the one."  
Truth.

Past Lover  
By: Helen Roldan

"You are my star," said  
he who bought another girl  
drinks in front of me.



Arranged Marriage  
By: Rummesa Abrar

My head is covered with  
Intrusive thoughts,  
I don't want to hear the laughter,  
Celebrating my wedding,  
What if he won't love me?  
My eyes are filled,  
My dupatta (scarf) acts as a shield,  
Blocking joy and festivity,  
Am I too young for this?  
My whole body is drowned in henna,  
My lengha (skirt) is too long for me,  
One last thought goes in my mind,  
Before they lift my veil,  
Will I be anything in life?

Underwear for my Feet  
By: Ruben Aguilar

I remember your drunken nights, mother,  
in your youth – too young to have a child.  
You cried when you washed my underwear  
and hid the tears to save your reputation.  
My father had left the city, being no man  
of the house, needing to stand on his on two feet.

Back then, I would swim outside until my feet  
looked as wrinkled as your own mother,  
who disowned us because my father wasn't man  
enough for the family's name. Not even a child  
was enough to accept him; her impeccable reputation  
couldn't accidentally become dirty underwear.

Back then, I would wear a cape and underwear,  
sparkling bleach-white briefs. And my earthy feet  
were outlawed: dirty couches give a bad reputation  
in front of the intrusive neighbors and your mother,  
knocking at the door with food for me, the child,  
because a woman can't survive without a man.

His moustache is all I remember of the man  
who is my father. I tried to wear his underwear  
when he was gone, but for such a small child,  
they were only useful to wipe mud off my feet,  
swimming in the pool and running from your mother  
through the weedy garden, which was only there for  
reputation.

Were you worried about your reputation  
when I woke up to find that boyish man  
in your bed? Did you think of your mother?  
I saw him struggling to find his underwear  
under the sheets she had bought, his feet  
hanging over the edge, like an overgrown child.

But I am no longer a child,  
and what I remember of you is the reputation  
of a young woman who used to wipe my feet  
before going to bed. You raised a man  
to the point I fit in my father's underwear,  
although I cannot seem to call you mother.

My feet remind me of the father I never had as a child,  
of you, not the mother, but the woman with a bad repu-  
tation,  
of the boyish man, and of my father's underwear.  
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of you, not the mother, but the woman with a bad reputa-  
tion,  
of the boyish man, and of my father's underwear.

Alpargatas  
Alejandro Valencia  
Painting



In Pinal Del Rio, Cuba, there is a cracked house. A colorless house whose age can only be determined by the drops of water that fall in the living room whenever it rains. The furniture is worn out, and the shower is a bucket full of water. There is barely any electricity, and the main sources of light are candles. The house may be old but it holds my most vivid childhood memories. This was my home.

Mi father was un roba carne, meat thief. In our country people were not allowed to eat meat that comes from cows, and horses. Because of this, people would pay lots of money to acquire just a piece of it. My father, who loved money, saw this as an opportunity to make lots of money, but the price was risky. The job required him to enter a private property, kill the cow, clean it, prepare the meat, and then sell it. Those are three crimes already. My father was smart, and slick, he only entered the same property after two to three months had passed. The government suspected already that he might be involved, but his tactics made it difficult to catch in action. Even so, my father knew that things were getting dangerous, and if discovered, the price would be death. He then took some of his saved money, and fled in a balsa, a boat. I was only two years old when my father left. He left Cuba the year a tropical storm destroyed our neighborhood. Unlucky enough for my mother and I, when my father left, he took with him our happiness and left us with his punishment. The government rebuilt and painted all of the houses, except ours. They told my mother that my father was a criminal, and we were suspects. And, so the little rights we had were taken away.

In school the kids bullied me. They called me casa rota, broken house. I did not understand what had I done to deserve such treatment from my people. When my mother passed by the streets, they called her ramera, or la esposa del traidor. My mother never gave in to their hurting comments; she always smiled and answered as if nothing had happened. But I knew she cried at night. I could

feel her sobs all the way through my spine. I knew I couldn't cry because I was the only thing she had left. I started to hate my father, and the people around us. Their comments only fed the beast inside of me, a beast that was hungering for revenge.

My mother did not know what to do, and my abuela never gave us the helping hand. My abuela had never approved of my mother's marriage. My abuela is a born and breed communist, and the fact that my dad was against the system, made her blood boil. Even when my mom was pregnant she told her to abort. My abuela despised me the most, because of my eyes. She would tell me that I had the devil's eyes just like my father, black and soulless. I was in a dead end, I felt lost. I started to skip classes and to get poor grades.

In my Spanish class a kid called me sucia, dirty, but I tried to ignore him. It hurt me though. My clothes were clean and so was my body, so why was I sucia? But I knew the answer. Because we did not have a proper shower, my mother had to bring buckets of water from the well so we could shower. This didn't mean that I did not shower twice a day. I was angry. And when my classmate spat on me, the beast broke loose. I punched with all I had, all of my hatred and anger came out in the shape of kicks and punches. I broke his lip and his nose, but I wanted more. I wanted to inflict physical pain equal to my inner pain. The teacher saw me and slapped me with a ruler, but the broken nose and lips were already there.

My mother cried like she never had before. I was mad at myself for hurting her just like my father had. I thought maybe it was in my blood or maybe I had been born broken just like my father, ruined beyond redemption. I could not bear to hurt my mother, not again. We had to leave this land. My father claimed us through a fake ID. He pretended to be a brother of mine to bring me over to Costa Rica. At first I was shocked, Costa Rica? Hadn't he gone to the U.S. It turns out he started selling stolen clothes in Florida, and got house arrest. After several violations, he was warned that a next time and he would serve two years in jail. A slick, smart guy he is, he put the detector on the cat, got a fake ID and ran to Costa Rica. How he got past the

airport? Beats me. But he did it; he got us out of Cuba. Even though we re-united, my parents never got back together. My mother just could not forgive him. However, I did forgive him. How could I not, he had the same black eyes I did, but now I know they weren't soulless, they were full of life.



P.O.W  
By: Kelly Marie Gonzalez

When we were captured, I pictured her just as she looked on our wedding day. Even with the sack that was placed over our heads, I pictured the way her hair was perfectly held up by bobby pins that were painted tiffany blue. I smelled her beautiful stargazer lily bouquet. I felt her pearl dress on my fingertips just as I leaned in for the deal-sealing kiss.

PDX Sculpture  
Jeff Peel  
Photography



## My Reflection

By: Yannel Marie Celestrin

Hallows Eve Horror Story Contest Winner

"Please, give me back my children!" My lungs could not scream any louder. The police officers took my children away from me. They said it would only be for a little while; they only needed to ask me a few questions. But the minutes had turned into hours, and I was afraid that I would never see my children again.

"Relax, lady. It's protocol. We can only have one person in the interrogation room at a time. Your children are safe. I only need to ask you a few questions and then you can leave. So let's start. " The interrogator told me. "Describe your relationship with your husband."

"We have been married for ten years. We have two children. We love each other very much. We seldom argue." I replied

"Do you know why you are here today? An incident happened about a week ago. A woman went crazy and killed her children. We suspect that she killed her husband too, but we haven't found his body yet." He said.

Suddenly, I reached across the table between us and grabbed his shoulders.

"Listen, it's not me that you have to worry about. It's my neighbor. She did some terrible things to her family... Horrible things."

"Back off lady! If you touch me again, we're going to have problems."

"I'm sorry; I don't know what came over me."

"Just tell me what you know."

Excitedly, I began to recount the events that happened in my neighbor's house.

"My neighbor was known to be a perfect wife, or so it seemed. She loved her husband and children. But, one day, she changed. Her baby boy was crying for milk. Her little girl was still sleeping. Her husband—"

"Did you get along well with your neighbor?"

"Yes, we used to be good friends. but I can't believe what she did. Her husband had left on one of his regular business trips. He was not interested

in his children. Even when he was in the house, he never paid either of them attention."

"How do you know how he was?"

"She told me, of course. I think that her loneliness got the best of her. She went to the kitchen to get her favorite knife. Then, she went to her daughter's room and smothered the child with a pillow. The girl clawed at her mother's hands, trying to free herself."

Unconsciously, I rubbed my arms and I noticed that I had a few cuts.

"She got the knife and stabbed the girl in the face. The pillow started to turn red. The blood felt so nice and warm in her hands."

I had this strange feeling to wipe my hands on my pants; I felt like they were dirty.

"Why did you—" I cut him off. I wanted to continue my story.

"Then, she went to the kitchen to prepare some milk, with a dose of rat poison, for her baby boy. She saw him greedily drink the milk, with a dose of rat poison, for her baby boy. She saw him greedily drink the milk. She watched as he started to choke on his blood, his little body squirming in her hands."

"Her husband returned that day from his business trip. He did not make it too far in the house. When he walked into her bedroom, she sprang from behind the door and began to cave his head in with a hammer. She pounded the hammer harder and harder into his face. The blood splattered on her arms and clothes. Then, she got the knife and cut him up in small squares, like if she were dicing a tomato. She put his remains in a bag and then she put it... Somewhere."

"How do you know all of this?"

"Well, I—"

Suddenly, the door opened and a police officer walked in.

"Sorry to interrupt, sir, but we're having a problem with one of the cells. We need you there immediately."

"I'll be right back," the investigator told me.

I walked around the room as I waited. I felt that someone was watching me; when I turned, I was staring at my reflection in the mirror. Funny I

look like—

"Sorry about that. Now, back to our talk. Tell me about your day," pried the investigator.

"Okay, well, it's just another regular day. I was alone in the house since my husband was on a business trip. It's been weeks since I last saw him."

The investigator's eyes seemed to widen for just a fraction of a second, then he stopped.

"I pulled myself out of bed and began the household chores. It was strange that my baby had not cried for milk yet or that my little girl was not jumping on my bed to wake me up, so I decided to check on them."

I couldn't stop scratching my head. The itch was driving me crazy. I picked the blood and dandruff from under my fingernails.

"I walked inside the baby's room, careful not to wake him up. I was surprised to see him sitting in a corner of the crib, silent and still. He usually crawls around in there, laughing and banging the railing for attention. I thought it was probably because he was very hungry, so I grabbed him and—"

"Where is your daughter?" he asked.

"She was still sleeping. She had a pillow on her head; she usually does that to go to sleep. I tell her it's dangerous, but she never listens to me. After I woke her up, I took both of them downstairs to fix them breakfast. There wasn't much food, so I decided to go to the grocery store."

My eyes wandered to my clothes. I noticed that I had patches of dirt on my shirt and on my skin. I don't remember the last time I showered.

"How did you get there?"

"I went walking, since the supermarket is so close to my house."

"Did anything strange happen during your walk? And your children were still with you, right?"

"Yes, my children were with me. I did notice something. I usually say hi to people but today, I felt that something was wrong. I felt people staring at me. I heard whispers."

I shivered, remembering what I saw.

"My baby boy dropped his toy, and when I bent down to pick it up, I saw a woman in the building. She was carrying a baby in her arms and

she was holding a little girl by the hand. Their skin was filthy and blistered. Their bodies were swollen and pale. The woman's hair was greasy. Her skin had smudges of dirt everywhere. She had scars on her arms. Her clothes were filthy and torn."

I looked at the mirror and stared at my reflection.





Adrenaline  
By: Claudia Gonzalez

She's running, there is something just igniting inside her. She knows in the morning she'll feel tired, no... exhausted, but it doesn't matter, right now she is the fire she left lit in the fireplace at home. Love is gone, she has escaped from its restraints, and now she sees the beautiful flames flowing through her veins. At this moment, she can fly. At this moment, she is an eagle, rushing through the open sky. She didn't know she could be this strong, this powerful, this... free. But she is, and the insanity of it is overwhelming. So she is running, running for her life, for the vibrations in her eardrums, for the sweet touch of the reckless wind, for the rough asphalt tearing the soles of her bare feet, and for the cooling of the wet grass. She keeps on running until she finds a river. She is fire.



I was, am, and will be many things; presently, I am a disembodied spirit watching a surgeon slice open my sternum and insert a vise-like metal contraption that spreads apart my chest, exposing my beating heart. It's flip-flopping around like a fish stranded on land. There are several other doctors and nurses in the operating room. They look like miners, with their headband flashlights and face masks, excavating my limp body for precious alloys. Miraculously the pain in my hands is gone, and so is my shortness of breath. Come to think of it, I don't think I am breathing at all. Funny, how I never noticed the physical act of breathing. I mean it is the most fundamental function keeping me, or at least my body, alive. You would think that all attention would be focused on just this one task. But in reality it happens so naturally, the movements occur so fluidly, that it goes by virtually unnoticed. Now that it's gone though, I am overwhelmed by how much I miss it, like someone who moves away from their apartment by the airport and cannot fall asleep without the familiar roar of the jet engines.

The green blips on the heart monitor go flat and the metronomic-beeps become a sustained monotone whine. There is a flailing mess of arms scrambling to bring me back to life. In the midst of all this frenzy the monitor's eerie ringing seems to be getting louder. After several minutes they remove all the tubes and disconnect all the machines, finally ending that incessant ringing. The surgeon sews up my chest leaving a ten inch long scar of sutures on my upper thorax. The indifference I feel at just witnessing my own death is somewhat puzzling.

The whole scene cuts in and out like a film being played with several blank frames in between the actual shots. Radiant entities slowly begin to take shape; the sterile white operating room is giving way to an expansive astral void. Shimmering celestial beings become clearer and clearer. They radiate flashes of harlequin light in tandem, as if communicating with these chrysanthemum-firework-displays. Their phosphorescence is mesmerizingly beautiful.

Suddenly, I am no longer in the operating room. There is no land. There is no sky. The terrain

is one huge geological conglomerate of intangible space. I am surrounded by multi-colored beings. Some are human-like, seemingly made of fibrous strands of light, others appear to be vaporous wraiths of luminosity. I am completely devoid of any sense of a corporeal existence and have an overwhelming sense of peace and well being. The one thing that keeps nagging at me, though, is the fact that I didn't finish my book. I spend, or spent I should say, most of my time reading. And I had been right in the middle of a really good mystery novel, a riveting whodunnit. I simply must know who the killer is. I always thought that when you die you become an all knowing ever present perfect being. I don't even know how my book ends, let alone the secrets of the universe. I can't help but feel a bit short changed. I am filled with a tremendous sense of inner-peace; and yet, I'm still thinking about that damn book.



Christina's World  
By: Stephanie Diaz

I do not know how far the path runs  
before the broken house sticks up from the hill  
Or how far I walked  
before the ocean of yellow straw consumed me  
I am still a girl of seven in my muddied dress  
Draped across the ocean  
A shipwreck



My House  
Johnathan Turnier  
Photography



Worship-Work  
[After "American Gothic"]  
By: Stephanie Lopez

Up at dawn, you work, sweat – just like the good  
lord intends.

A man of tradition? The exhaustion of lifelong fervor  
mapped on your face.

A family man? Kept that girl of yours home an awful  
long time.

A charitable man? The muscles of your mouth fixed.

A humble man? Your eyes waiting to weigh on the  
words of others.

Bed by dusk, you pray, tired – tomorrow night might  
as well be the day before.

"Portrait of My Grandmother Sewing-Hom-  
age to Vermeer"  
Alejandro Valencia  
Painting





## No Place Like Home

By: Meghan Martinez

Summers in Hialeah smell like mangoes. I swear it. There's just something about the sticky July heat that carries the fruity scent throughout the city. No Hialeah home is complete without a mango tree. I have two. I read somewhere that long ago, in Asia, mangoes were considered the fruit of kings. Only royalty was allowed to eat them and commoners were punished for even a taste. Mango groves are said to have been Buddha's preferred place of meditation. In my hometown, mangoes are so abundant they are sold in corners for a dollar and are given to coworkers in shopping bags. Hialeah, the City of Kings.

In a shopping center by my house, is a Sedano's that was built a few years ago. The grocery store looks nothing like its much older sister stores. The ones littered around the city are old and uninviting. But the Sedano's around the corner to my house is a perfect mix of old and new. The newly built shopping center stands out against its older neighboring stores. They stand ashamed around it, with their chipping paint in outdated colors, silently envying its modern shopping carts and sliding doors. The walls are all freshly painted and the windows are all clean and shiny. But just like no home is complete without a mango tree, no shopping center is complete without its share of old men lingering nearby, talking about Cuban politics and American baseball. Although these senior cliques are quite common in this immigrant city, they almost look out of place standing there, with their old trucker hats and mismatching thrift store clothes. It's almost as if the viejitos are trying to hold on to their precious bodega that has been replaced by a grocery store chain.

The heat is sometimes unbearable, and yet I still refuse to make use of my air conditioning when I'm driving. Putting up my windows feels like I am shutting myself away from the sights and sounds of this little progressive city. I enjoy driving with the windows down and my music blasting in the summer. Whatever awesome rock song I am jamming to at the moment must be shared with other appreciative youth. Hear me I quietly hope to myself. I am a reminder that Hialeah will soon belong to our

generation. But at any moment, a little white haired old lady hugging the steering wheel can cut me off, reminding me that her generation still runs this town. If you can drive here, you can drive anywhere.

I have family in Nebraska, and every time they visit, they comment on the people in the streets, happily walking through traffic selling fruits or passing out flyers. I'd never realized how unique to Hialeah that was until they commented on it. It had never occurred to me that I couldn't buy a bottle of water or a bag of oranges at a streetlight in Pembroke Pines. In Hialeah, the vendors roam up and down the lines of stopped cars listening for a honk that will promise them business. When they hear it, they hurry to find their customer and hope that they have their money readily available, lest they hear the other kind of honk, which usually means get the hell out of the way.

There's a corner store not far down the street from the Sedano's that has a little window where they serve you coffee and other quick snacks through. Only in Hialeah can you buy un cafesito and a small media noche sandwich for as little as \$1.75. I go there whenever I want a quick snack before going somewhere. The little window they sell the cafesito through leads into a small room big enough for only one person. This room is usually occupied by the corner store owner's wife. A little cubed television sits in the corner where she can comfortably swivel around her high chair to catch the news or the latest novela. Her cordless phone is always on her lap ready to be answered in case of the occasional phone call. There, she makes the coffee and heats up the media noches and pastelitos. Her husband, a big strong looking man with Popeye forearms and sky blue eyes, sits outside on a bar stool, chatting and laughing with customers waiting for their coffee. Though his face is void of the wrinkles his wife's face is kindly decorated with, his closely cropped hair is a shock of white.

Once, while I was patiently waiting for my delicious media noche, I saw a young man about my age pull up in a trendy VW. His ears were gauged and he wore a studded belt with colorful tattoos of koi fish and geishas running up and down his arms. He came up to the window and kissed the lady on

the cheek and hugged her husband. From their conversation I could tell he was their son, coming back from running some errands for their store. Again, this curious mix of old and new was happening before me. He said his goodbyes and drove away blasting his music with his windows down, his youthful flag of sound waves reaching my ears promising a progressive future for Hialeah. I Hear You.

West Kendall  
Johnathan Turnier  
Photography



Letter from the Editors

Axis, an imaginary line to which elements of a work of art are referred for measurement. Where did this talent come from? It’s pumping through the veins of our urban city, with the cultures of our students flooding through it.

In this volume, we’ve changed the urbanized outlook into a more reminiscent and warm feeling, honoring our cultures and the cities we call home by recognizing the unique quirks that make it beautiful. Everything from the symphony of traffic horns to the portraits of mango trees swaying in the breeze; these are the recognizable brushstrokes of our city.

At the heart sits Miami Dade College, North Campus. Here, students come and produce beautiful and amazing works from the smallest literary piece to the most intricate painting.

Like crayons melting in the sun, each a different color, blends together to create something new, this is our art oasis.

Additional Editors/ Staff  
Special Thanks



