









**Cafè Cultura**  
Volume VII



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

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Light is bent and trapped; redirected, focused, twisted, lost, and by the time what is left reaches our eyes, and we are able to process what we think we've seen, it's too late. The image has changed, we are left with only our perceptions of reality.

We as individuals are like prisms, multifaceted beings who take on a myriad of roles a day (who knows how many in a lifetime!). Our identities are in a constant state of flux, ever evolving, with some of the more poignant aspects of our inner selves hidden even to those we love most, often even to ourselves. However, there are times when we are forced to come to terms with our secret identities, when the world is able to see, if only for a second, the person behind the glass. These moments, or epiphanies, redefine who we are and can be the catalyst for the greatest changes in our lives.

Like light, we too are bent and shaped by our obstacles. The tragedy, or humor (cup half full), is that when we finally feel like we have it figured out, something changes; we evolve. Part of the human condition is a compulsion to seek out truth. The vexing thing is that since we are ever evolving, so too are our beliefs, and so the things we hold to be true when we're fifteen rarely are when we turn thirty-two.

In this seventh issue, we seek to illuminate those few, but brilliant moments, in which our invisible selves are brought to light. We hoped to capture the ephemeral nature of the epiphany, and as a result, this issue is full of pieces that are short, direct, and honest.

We invite you to join us in exploring the many versions of ourselves and hope that in doing so, you too can have the courage and the clarity to let your invisible self come to light.







Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz - Glasses



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# CHRISTMAS 2006

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V A N E S S A   H E R N A N D E Z

All I wanted was a book  
But got a coin collector  
Without batteries  
And all day long  
I had to smile  
Because old cousin Charlie  
Had been sick all year  
And all he wanted was  
To be around me  
Even though he makes me  
Sit on his lap whenever  
He wants to brush my hair.  
His hands like paper  
Turning- strand by strand;  
His breath coppery pennies  
Too many times  
Handled-handling  
Too many times.

*Academy of American Poets Grand Prize Winner  
Fred Shaw Poetry Contest 2014  
Miami Dade College*



Milton Moreno - Constant



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# COMO AIRE PARA LA ISLA

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G A B R I E L A G O M E Z

En una Isla encantada,  
Donde nadie se conoce,  
Donde todo, pero nadie es importante  
Yo vivo y paso inadvertida como el aire...

En esta Isla la apariencia y posesiones  
Son lo elemental, lo notable, lo más natural,  
Lo que te convierten en alguien y te definen como persona  
Y según los habitantes garantiza la felicidad.

Llena de cosas bellas, exóticas, deseadas,  
Que poco a poco nos substituyen, entonces, de que valemós los seres humanos?  
Como podemos llegar a pagar algo material con nuestra vida?  
Es eso normal? como sabremos?... en la Isla, nuestra Isla.

Ya no somos la competencia, ahora la creamos.  
El ejemplo de persona es la delgada, radiante y poderosa,  
Y la que no llega alto no llega a nada,  
En esta Isla preciosa la cual juntos, poco a poco hemos creado.

En nuestra Isla solo conocemos lo positivo y lo negativo;  
Aves preciosas, paraísos, gente brillante, lujosas bebidas,  
Animales extremadamente feos,  
O ignorantes que vagando y alborotando van por la vida.

Y yo?, y él?, y ella?

Acaso no merecemos alguna categoría?

-Sí!, murmullan cuando a solas se encuentran,

-No!, exclaman cuando en público hipócritas se elogian.

Hermosa Isla, añorada, encantada, abundante, única!

Quien no lleva la túnica lleva heridas en el alma, dichoso aquel que se salva!

Oh, mi Isla!

Perfectamente imperfecta, insuficiente en absoluto, para todo y todos,

Menos para mí, que paso inadvertida,

Como aire en el ambiente, como agua en la sequía...





Rosendo De Vicente - High Score

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# BAM

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X A V I E R L O P E Z

The baby is born. The billions of people, and it happens to be him. He takes his first steps, his first walk, his first words, and he talks back. The kid makes his first friend: Nathaniel. Of the billions of people, it happens to be him. He has his first laugh, his first smile, his first tragedy. He attends his first and last day of school. He has his first kiss, his first love, and the first heartbreak. "CLEAR!" He makes love for the first time at sixteen. He seduces Alisha to strip Rachel's clothes. He throws Mary on the bed and caresses Melanie. "CLEAR!" The man meets the women he will marry: Aaliyah. The billions of people, and it happens to be her. The first date at the skating rink becomes their fourth date at Le Chateau Bleu. He kneels to propose, and he stands to kiss the bride. He takes her to the honeymoon suite, and he leaves to take the kids to school. "COME ON, WE'RE LOSING HIM!" He watches as his son is born and finally feels

unconditional love. He feels it again as he watches his daughter's birth five years later. A high pitched whirring fills his eardrums. He sees a bright light, and feels his body floating towards it. "CLEAR DAMMIT!" He's on his way home from working late night. He's afraid. The parking lot is empty and dark and lonely and he's terrified. The child shouts out to him, and he's horrified. The child's eyes are blank and wrapped in hunger and anger and demands for the man's money. The man is deaf and frozen in fear. The child raises his voice and brandishes his Glock. The man is silent. He's afraid and waiting and silent and- Bam! it feels as if he has died for the second time. The flashes of his life fade in color and vibrancy. Out of the billions of people, and this happens to happen to him. The infant becomes the child becomes the adult becomes the infant again, a cycle of life until- "He's gone. You can call them. Tell them that the patient is DOA."



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# SEED

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B A S M A D U R R A N I

Rising from the mud

The Lotus Flower inhales

A new beginning



Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz - Light Dance



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# DEEP SEA DIVER

## V A N E S S A   H E R N A N D E Z

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Air tank, air source (snorkel and mask), pressure gauge, dive computer, weight belt, diving boots, and buoyancy compensator: they're all here. My air tank says it's full; I check the pressure: all checks out. I'm perched between two of the largest rock formations I've come across. The seaweed dance around the rock, and the sun glitters through the top levels of the ocean and down to me. I study my surroundings to see if everything is in order: jellyfish floating by, fish in their schools, octopi and eels secluded in their rock homes, and crabs roaming the ocean floor. Safe. You can never be too cautious. Every day, there's calculated risk, but I love being here. I love all the summer-colored fish and coral; the orange lined trigger fish that inhabit the cloud shaped rocks off in the distance; the crystallizing effect of the water when the sun hits it. Being surrounded by such alien-like beauty makes it all worth the solitude.

At first, I was afraid of the vastness of the

ocean, and all the strange salt water fish: some were huge and menacing with mismatched eyes and mouths that let food just swim in; others were thin and fast, flashing out of all corners, but frightening all the same. After diving for so long, you never really know what you're going to see, but you have no choice but to learn all of their names.

Sometimes, I wouldn't see some of my favorite fish, the striped surgeonfish and the regal tang, for a while. I especially love how the mandarin fish has small flecks of green and orange-how someone personally took the extra time to make him more beautiful than he was graceful; I love the almost neon lines of the surgeonfish-how they all seem to glow in the dark and how I can spot them from a distance. I like to think that they've gone off to explore with their fish families far off, as I would if I had a diver wife and diver kids. One can only dream.

I don't usually venture off from my post, but the weird screech coming from the other side of the rocks I'm typically perched at didn't sound like a fish. I check my signals again- still safe. I study my surroundings: there's a light I faintly remember, a light so bright it covers all the ocean floor. I stare up in awe of its strength and power. Majestic. Nothing like the other things I've seen pass by. I edge closer to the rocks' center to get a glimpse of the other side, but the light is blinding and the fish scatter to their rocks, and coral, and anemone. I'm frozen.

A huge net enters the water, and a massive wave strikes me, pushing me back. I hurry back pushing against the current, vision blurred by the bubbles created by the wave against my mask, crashing into bright orange coral and fish flashing past me. One by one, the mossy green net captures the fish (clown fish, moray eels, tangs, puffers, sea horses, lion fish, basslets) until they're all gone. I knew the ocean was

vast, but it felt endless without all the carefree and melancholy grandness of the strange, but absolutely stunning radiance of all that lived under the ocean. Never have I ever felt lonelier.

The webbed net came back in and started to pull up the coral-topped rocks. A silver tinted machine came in after it, and a humming began to vibrate the waters with intensity, sending off goose bumps that I've never felt in the presence of the deadliest jellyfish. The water began to swirl, and the sand started rising along with the water, taking me along with it. The seaweed and the little rocks that cover the ocean floor started to rise too, in a blurry tornado. And then right before I was almost sucked in by the water vacuum, something reached in and grabbed me and pulled me out of the water.

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# CARTAS DEL OLVIDO

## D A N I E L M A D R I D

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Las cartas del olvido  
todavía las tengo  
y aunque esta noche no vengo  
sepa que la he querido  
que del tiempo que he vivido  
no maldigo ni una vez  
que si el mundo fue al revés  
y de mi lado no estuvo  
sepa que no hubo  
una mujer como Usted.  
No es mucho lo que pido  
solo poder olvidarte  
No quiero recordarte  
para no ver lo que he sufrido  
Y a pesar de que yo he sido

el que acabo nuestro amor  
sepa que tengo color  
y un espíritu sereno  
y no soy aquel veneno  
que se guarda en tu dolor.  
Las cartas del olvido  
todavía las tengo.  
La quiero y no le miento  
mas no es correspondido.  
Si me borras yo te pido  
no olvides mi nombre  
que aunque de ganas sobre  
nos dimos un querer.  
Tú fuiste mi mujer  
y también fui tu hombre.





Nelson Devesa - Pura Agua

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# NEARLY HOME

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H U G O F O N S E C A

The sun perched low at the center of the cyan summer morning as the mossy Ford Pinto staggered through the Chihuahuan desert road. Amongst the crumbled Almond Joy candy wrappers, the rusted crimson tool box which banged against the trunk's top whenever Alberto turned sharply, and the onix spare tire that reeked of motor oil and old beer, lay Fran. He held his mustard yellow flashlight with Donald Duck crudely plastered on the side over the last issue of Spider Man that Alberto got him at their last gas stop. He turned the pages of the comic book carefully, attempting not to get any of the sweat that trickled down his black hair.

The Ford Pinto began to slow down. Fran looked at the lock on the sealed trunk, pushing his drenched hair from his eyes. He heard a car door opening and the creaking of the car as someone exited the driver seat. He placed his flashlight and comic book in his olive duffel bag. The trunk jolted open and the morning sunlight coated every corner of the gray interior. Fran slowly opened his eyes, adjusting to the

strong light and the blurred surroundings. Alberto stood over Fran, Almond Joy in hand, "Come on, little cousin, we're making a gas stop before we get to the Rio." Fran began to lift himself out from the trunk but clumsily fell out on to the burning pavement.

"How much closer, Alberto? I don't think I can keep cooking away in this trunk," sighed Fran.

Alberto's laugh roared as he rubbed his patchy beard. "Ah cousin, you complain too much. We're almost in America!" Alberto held out his forearm and grabbed Fran from the shoulder, lifting him up with ease.

The gas station was an old, moldy, wooden shack with two dust encrusted pumps that seemed to only give out sand. Fran followed Alberto into the shack. The smell of boiled beef and cigar smoke took over the air, forcing Fran to hold his hands over his nose. The owner of the gas shack was a short and pudgy man, whose almond shaded mustache was coated with crumbs of forgotten meals. He bit the tip

of his cigar and twirled it around his mouth as the two cousins approached him. Alberto reached into his paint-cruste d jean shorts and retrieved his wallet. “Hello! Thirty on whatever pump has gas.”

The owner of the shack smacked his lips together, “You’re not from Mexico, are you?”

Fran shook his head and lowered his hands, “No, sir. My cousin and I come from Nicaragua. My father left for America, ‘cause of the war. We thought maybe we could find a better life in America too.”

The owner of the shack chuckled heavily with breaks of coughing, “A better life over there with the gringos? And how do you even plan on reaching America?”

Alberto pushed the wavy locks of chestnut hair from his round cheeks, keeping his gaze fixed on the wooden countertop, “We both... have student visas. My cousin and I are quite lucky.”

Alberto wiped the sweat from his brow and peered at Fran, who kept his gaze fixed past the shop owner’s forehead.

The shack owner’s laugh intensified as he banged his hands on the damp molded counter, “Ah,

I didn’t know I was standing amongst scholars? Here, I’ll throw in a fine bottle of rum to give you some liquid courage on your travels. But remember, the Americans have no love for us. They never will. Break a leg, amigos.” The owner handed over a bottle with copper colored liquid to Fran. The bottle had a child-like drawing of the owner with a vibrant rainbow poncho on it.

“Did you make this yourself?” said Alberto as he glanced over the poorly done drawing. The owner nodded triumphantly as his amber and dirt crusted teeth poked through his wide smile.

The mossy Ford Pinto roared violently as Fran and Alberto rejoined the road. They drove down the endless desert road, passing monumental red rocky landscapes that seemed to elongate the road even more. Night brought the moon and stars with it, Alberto began to get off the main road. He parked the old Pinto behind a collection of large burned boulders. The two cousins foraged for twigs and leaves. Alberto neatly stacked rocks in a circle and placed the wood in the center. He reached into his jean shorts and pulled out a box of matches. He pushed open the



box and found one match, “Fran, I don’t want to screw this up. You light the fire!”

Fran’s shoulders slumped. “Why can’t you do it? Everytime I do something, you yell at me for screwing it up!”

Alberto ran his hands through his tangled hair. “Well yeah, you tend to mess things up.”

Fran dragged his hand across his face. “Then why would you want me to do it?”

Alberto reached into his backpack and shrugged. “ You know, because I don’t want to screw it up and it’s easy just to be mad at you.”

Fran snatched the match, striking it against the sanded crimson box. Alberto hastily raised his hands over his eyes except for a small gap in between his index and middle finger. A small flame burst; he closed in on the pit, fanning it. Fran’s hands trembled as one held the match and the other secured the flame from invading wind. He dropped on to one knee, and nurtured the flame on to the bed of twigs and leaves. “Alberto, we have fire!”

Alberto ripped open the seal of the rum.

He raised the bottle to his lips and gulped down the murky fluid. The rum traced down his beard to his neck, and all the way to his weathered David Bowie Diamond Dogs t-shirt. Alberto coughed, pounding his fist on his chest as he gasped. “You know, if you would have studied more, Fran, you probably would have had the student visa like me. But no, you’re always too busy, cousin. You’re too preoccupied reading those coloring books and watching movies about clubs who eat breakfast or whatever” Alberto slurred.

“I don’t even know where to begin my explanation on how idiotic you just sounded. They’re comic books, and the movie is called the Breakfast Club!” Fran replied, keeping his stare on the crackling flame. Alberto stood up, a trail of rum followed him with each step that neared Fran.

“You know what, I can’t wait for us to reach California. The sooner we find my uncle, the sooner I can get away from you-” lightning flashed across the clustered skyline, followed by the roaring echo of thunder.

Fran held out his palm, collecting incom-

ing droplets,” That’s if we find my father. He hasn’t responded back to me in months...”

Alberto looked down on the dirt. “Look, I’m sorry-” Lightning slammed furiously yards away from the cousins.

Alberto stumbled his way toward the car, spilling the remaining content of the bottle. The rain picked up, and gust of winds seesawed the car back and forward as the two cousins approached it. Fran moved around the car to the driver seat,

“Maybe I should drive.”

“No, you don’t touch the Pinto.”

“But you’re drunk.”

“And?”

“You’re really drunk.”

“...And?”

Fran snatched the keys from Alberto’s hands. “I’ll drive us until you sober up, deal?” Lightning cracked loudly as the storm picked up.

“...Deal” Alberto muttered.

They drove down the ragged road as the storm began to swallow them. The Pinto swayed

violently to the conductions of the gust. Alberto laid in the back seat, clenching onto the seat belt and the cup holder.

“Fran! Fran!” Alberto exclaimed.

“Yes?”

“I’m sorry...I can be a dick some-” Alberto fell off the seat, curling amongst the Almond Joy crumbs. The road started flooding, collecting the dirt into clumps of mud that engulfed the tires of the Pinto.

Fran carefully maneuvered through the flood, but the car slowed down until it remained stagnant. The car was nearly swallowed whole by the flood. From rim to window, the murky waters trapped the Pinto.

“Shit.” Fran slammed his fist on the dashboard. He tilted his head towards the passenger window, then jolted up quickly. In the haze of the storm, an amber light flickered in the distance.

“Fran, I’m sorry,” Alberto said as he twisted around the floor of the car.

“Relax, Alberto.”

“No seriously, I have to stop being such a-”

“Shhh, look out the window.”



Rebecca Oliva - Toca

Alberto rose up and stared out at the weathered road. "What ...What exactly am I looking at?"

Fran pressed his finger against the glass with a wide grin.

Alberto stared at the light, then suddenly jumped in his seat. "That's the-"

"Yup!" Fran chuckled.

"We made it to the Rio!" Alberto sang.

The two cousins bounced around the car, Alberto even hopped over to the passenger seat and hugged Fran, who reluctantly accepted.

"Okay.. Okay.. so let me check the car and you start hiding in the trunk."

"Okay, I'll see you in America, Alberto." Fran said.

"I'll see you in America, little cousin."

The flooded road began to clear, leaving large puddles composed of the hot desert sand and what hid in them. Alberto vaulted out the car and made his way towards the engine. Fran opened the trunk and took out his yellow Mickey Mouse pancho his dad sent him from Disney Land. He went over to Alberto, who

pushed down the the top of the car with a triumphant smile.

"Alright, that should be good enough to get us through."

The trunk closed down on Fran as he lay back. The sound of the rain against the aluminum car exterior bathed Fran, making him unable to hear anything inside the car except for the occasional pop from the engine. Fran reached into his wallet, retrieving an old photograph. He smiled, brushing off droplets and dirt that collected at the corners of the photograph. The photo depicted a young Fran at the side of an older gentleman with a strong jaw and thick mustache.

"Father, I'm almost home-" Fran whispered, then placed the photo back in his wallet. The car began to slow down until it came to a full stop. The droplets banging against the outer trunk paused, the radio from inside the car stopped, and Fran's breath slowly came to a halt. From outside, he could sort of hear Alberto as he spoke in a language he sort of understood- English? Fran thought to himself. Sud-



denly, he heard a loud thump on the trunk of the car which forced the Pinto to lean back. The trunk slightly popped open, letting in a fraction of the murky light in. Fran scuttled as far back into the trunk that he could and held his hand over his mouth...

“And do you have anything in the trunk, sir?” an unfamiliar voice boomed.

“Just my books and luggage, Officer.” Alberto said.

The trunk slowly began to open. Fran frantically looked around the trunk. He pushed Alberto’s bag out of the way and retrieved his duffle bag. He pulled out his Spider-Man comic and eased it out the gap between him and the outside. The comic slipped out before the Officer fully opened the trunk. The officer bent down, stared at the comic and ginned at Alberto.

“Is this Amazing Spider-Man #14?”

“Uh.. Yeah.. I think?” Alberto said as he buried his face into his palms.

The officer fiercely closed the trunk. “I’ve been looking for this issue for years! Do you mind if I

have it?”

Alberto hesitated. “Sure? I mean, yes of course! Go ahead!”

The car’s engine roared; Fran uncovered his mouth as Alberto joyously sang.

“Oh my god, Fran. You actually didn’t screw this up!”

The Pinto swayed towards the right and came to a stop. Fran pushed back his sweat coated hair as the trunk opened. Fran hoisted himself up and eased out of the trunk but fell down onto the scorching concrete. He looked up. They were surrounded by vibrant lush trees and the lavender-scarlet sky which hung low as the remains of the day trickled away. Far to the east, a town with no name lay before them. Its smells bathed the newcomers with promises of excitement and fear. Fran picked himself up and turned to Alberto with a wide grin across his face. Alberto turned to Fran, with a wide smile illuminating his face, a half-eaten Almond Joy in hand, and their new home to venture forth into.



Milton Moreno - Shells

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# FEBRUARY 12TH

## X A V I E R L O P E Z

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An anniversary that we wish would not come, but every year it does. My mother avoids it by burying herself in her chores, working herself to her tired bones. My father sits slumped in his chair, playing his classic salsa music to the highest volume of his speakers. I look out into the blank city lights from my balcony and remember the day my uncle was sent to prison.

The tension was palpable; it hung in the air, clouding the courtroom. It seemed we all had trouble speaking. We watched, in quiet dread, as the lawyers paraded in front of us, showcasing their fraudulent claims for their audience.

The prosecuting team of clowns approached the bench, a suave looking man, with the smirk of a fox and the eyes of a rat. He regaled us yet again with this farce: “The defendant Oscar Villalba was discovered with four kilos of cocaine in his vehicle, and we have reasonable suspicion that he had the intent to distribute.”

Oh, how I hated everybody in that courtroom!

This clown standing in front of everyone, with no shame in his bald faced lies, used these snakes-in-the-grass police officers currently seated to the back of us. I hated them and the jurors, who seemed to believe every fib, half-truth, and tall-tale, judging by their emotionless, judgmental eyes. I hated the judge, probably aware of this conspiracy, but finding glee in ruining families and lives.

I wanted to stand! I wanted to shout! I wanted to let the jurors know the real story, about how my uncle was tricked by his “so called” friend to drive a car packed to its teeth with drugs. I wanted to reveal how the same friend was working for the police, and how he was tricking other people to fall for the same sting. This was all a set-up by the officers to increase the number of people incarcerated, but all I could do was sit and watch this travesty to justice. I bore through the closing statements and watched the jurors leave to deliver the verdict.

They came in, silently and deliberately, single lined back into the bench. My parents, my aunt, and I





Nelson Devesa - Take Shelter



watched on from the front row. My uncle sat next to his lawyer, the expression on his face blank. The whizzing of lights and the whirring of the air conditioner stopped, and it was deathly quiet. “We, the jury, find the defendant, Oscaro Villalba,” the man in the middle of the bench began, “guilty on all charges.” I heard my mother weeping behind me.

I come back into the apartment with a mind full of unhappy memories. My mother and I exchange a glance, and we both know what I am thinking. She gives me a half-hearted smirk and goes back to mopping the floor of the kitchen. I pass her and my father, and I walk into my room.



Milton Moreno - Feeder

# SADIEL "SPEEDY"



Alderan or Bust



# RUIZ



INQUINNZICLE



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# ENGAGEMENT

L I A N A   R O D R I G U E Z

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ACT 1  
SCENE 1

(A Three-Star restaurant in downtown Chicago. A man and woman, both in their early 20s, sit at a table, quietly eating.)

NATALIE: This is really good.

JOSH: Oh yeah, yeah. I like the way they... grill chicken.

NATALIE: Me, too.

(They continue to eat in silence. JOSH's leg begins to shake and his hands soon follow.)

NATALIE: Josh, what's wrong?

JOSH: Nothing. I'm just really cold.

NATALIE: Do you want to head out of here?

JOSH: No, I'm fine. I uh oh man, okay.

NATALIE: (Smiling, slowly getting excited) Are you...

JOSH: Yeah, I'm just gonna...

(JOSH bends down on one knee in front of NATALIE, with his hands out stretched to take hers.)

JOSH: Natalie, even though I'm a big idiot, will you marry me?

NATALIE: (Crying, very happy) Of course I'll marry you, Josh!

(They exchange a long hug. After a bit, JOSH sits back down. NATALIE is still

standing, waiting for something.)

NATALIE : (Smiling) So...

JOSH: (Smiling hugely) Yep.

(NATALIE hesitates. She doesn't want to ruin the moment, but she has to ask.)

NATALIE: Does your new fiancée get a ring to... commemorate this happy occasion?

JOSH: Oh... well I've actually been saving up to get you a really nice one. I'll have it soon.

NATALIE (Sits down, her excitement waning): Oh... okay.

JOSH: That's okay, right?

NATALIE: Yeah, of course. I just wanted to be able to tell everyone right away.

JOSH: I mean... you can still tell people...

NATALIE: Without a ring?

JOSH: I don't see why not.

NATALIE: I think I'll just wait. It's nice to have a ring, you know, to show people.

JOSH: I would've started saving up sooner... I didn't know it meant so much to you.

NATALIE: It doesn't. You know me, I don't care about that stuff. It just... makes the engagement... solid.

JOSH: Oh... wow.

NATALIE: You know what I mean. Not solid, just more real.

JOSH: That sounds even worse... Look it's okay, I understand. The ring is a nice thing.

NATALIE: Exactly, it's not what really matters.

JOSH: Yeah.

(They sit in silence for a couple beats.)

JOSH: Except I guess it kind of is what matters...if the engagement isn't real without it.

NATALIE: Josh -

JOSH: Compared to loving you enough to ask you to marry me it's-

NATALIE: Okay wait, that's not what I meant at all. You always get like this, assuming things and -

(JOSH smiles and begins to laugh at her.)

NATALIE: And of course, you're messing with me, as usual.

JOSH: (Still laughing) You let it happen, Nat.

NATALIE: So, you know what I mean? About the ring? It's not about us or -

JOSH: I know. Don't worry, I'm gonna get you a nice ring.

NATALIE: But it's not about that at all, you know. It's just nice.

JOSH: I know.

(They continue eating their meals, mostly in silence.)



Rosendo De Vicente - Psychedelia



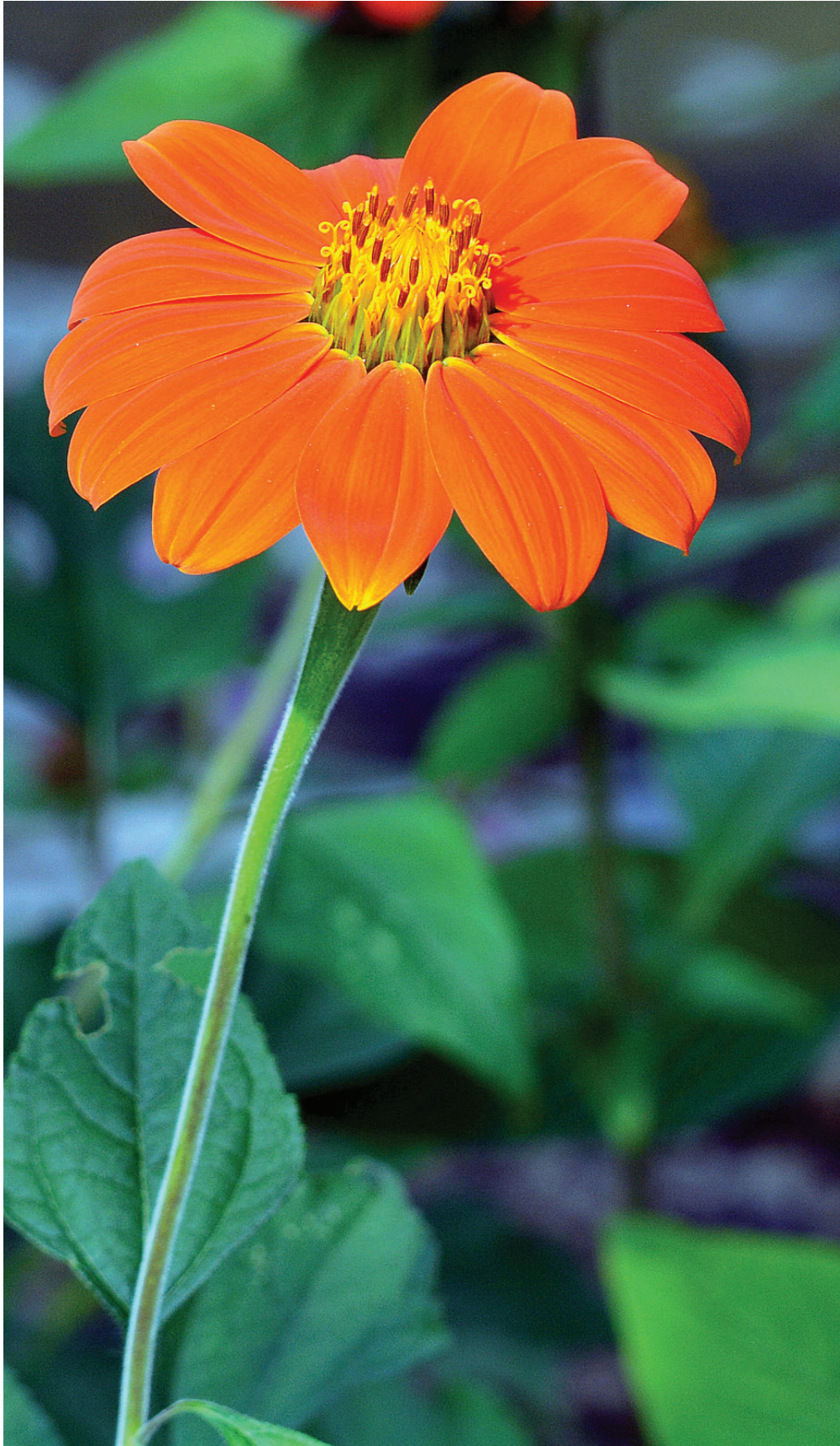
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# TWIRL

## I S M E L R I V E R A

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The pointe shoe jumps and  
Lands, twirls like a top  
And stops with a  
Successful plié in fifth position  
Perfectly and does a beautiful  
Port de bras with a smile that  
Makes the crowd clap with  
Excitement, when suddenly  
She trips, slips and falls and the look  
Of disappointment, embarrassment makes  
Her sad, she jumps back in place filling  
Her tutu with the tears that come,  
Out of her eyes, watching, as people  
Laugh, at her failure, at her running  
Makeup, she took a big  
Breath, and courageously  
She does a tendu and prepares  
To fouette, she pirouettes and carefully  
Takes her pointe out of passé, extends  
And does a rond de jambe en l'air,  
Repeatedly twirls, lands in fourth position  
Croise, the crowd goes wild.



Milton Moreno -Exuberance

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# IMPRINT

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X A V I E R L O P E Z

Street Life's a short stop

your picture's on my T-shirt

Faded Glory's shot





Nelson Devesa - Lines



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# MATADOR

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E L A I N E L A B R A D O R

It was early in a sunny August morning, 1997 in Havana, Cuba. My mother and I were waiting at the train station. We were going to visit my grandmother in a small town on the other side of the country. Suddenly, an old man with long, white hair stepped in front of a small crowd and yelled: “The Bull is coming.” Everyone in the waiting room took their bags and went to the platform where the “Bull” would stop.

A bellowing reverberated from around the bend, and the bull showed its face. At that moment, I saw its steely haunches; I understood why the old man compared it to a bull. There it was, charging, a behemoth with two gigantic incandescent eyes, spewing black smoke from its head, groaning with such a force, that I couldn’t even hear my inner voice. My heart beat rose with the tremors racing through the ground.

A young man jumped back from the edge of the track and yelled; “Stay back.” My mother hugged me, putting me behind her. The noise faded,

and alongside it, my fear. I looked at the bull. It was massive and dark, but it wasn’t evil. The train hostess took our tickets and guided us toward our seats. Once seated, the power of the massive creature reached my mother and me. My mother was oblivious, but charging across the land, always a moment from careening out of control, the greatness of the bull overtook me.

About an hour into the trip the view was changing; green scenery flashed by the window; we were getting into the countryside. After a while, even the thrill of riding in the Bull became monotonous, so I started to play a game with my mom. She said to me “I spy, with my little eyes a thing beginning with T.” I had to look around and guess what it could be. Like the axles of the train, the fickle minds of the young are in constant motion, and I left this game and started to play with some dolls that I had brought from home. It began to rain not long after.

When we were close to our destination, the train hostess, a lanky woman in her blue uniform, informed us that we should go into a coach near to the locomotive engine. My mom explained to me that it was because in that town the platform was too short to cover the length of the train.

The moment I sat in my seat, a chilly wind swept over the car, and through the open window, it smelt like rain and electricity; wind just before a thunderstorm. The train braked sharply, and my mother had just enough time to cover me. The metallic smell intensified. There was no breeze this time; it came out of nowhere. All I could smell and feel was the tingle of electricity. The lights in the ceiling went dark, one by one all in the span of a few seconds, till we were left in the dark. Lightning flashed, illuminating the car, while the roar of the thunder shook the train and people until everything rattled, threatening to come undone.

People began screaming, and I shut my eyes. I felt my mother's body over my own. Even when

I opened them, all I could see was the fabric of her clothing. When I caught a glimpse of the wreckage outside, all I saw was a wall of grey metal in front of the window. "What was that?" I asked my mother. She didn't seem to hear me. The hostess rushed down the car, calming the passengers and urging them to sit down. We heard the ambulance before we could see it, its siren a banshee's wail in the midst of the crisis. "What was going on, mami?" I asked again; there was a sudden urgency in my voice. Maybe it was the fear in my tone that stilled her tongue, as I'd never been a fearful child. Whatever the reason, she could not prevent me from seeing the accident.

The train didn't suffer any serious damage, but it was obvious that the bus wasn't that lucky. The heavy rain had obscured the driver's vision. After stopping on the tracks in a crossing, the bus driver didn't have time to cross, at least that was what I was told by my mother. Only one passenger on the bus survived: a middle aged woman. I was not allowed

to watch the goings on of the police and the other workers, but my curiosity was getting bigger as time passed. It can't be explained what I saw in a moment when the adults became distracted; it was pure carnage. Seven hours passed, the atmosphere was so tense in that wagon; people became anxious, but nobody dared to complain; there was nothing to do, just wait. After a long time, the engine started. "Oh what a relief," I said. It was the longest trip I took in my whole life.

My mother spoke with some people from that day, and they told her where to find the surviving woman. She told my mother what she was able. The woman related the desperation, the fear, the uncertainty that she felt in those few seconds. There were two pregnant women, five children and over 30 people in this bus. There was not one casualty or injury on the train, except for the conductor who suffered a nervous breakdown and required therapy. He was taken to the hospital in shock. "I saw death," he babbled.



Rosendo De Vicente - Gridlock





Gabriela Gomez- Recess

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# Post Procrastination

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J O E L   B R I T O

Clickety clack my harried hand goes

Clickety clack the steady beat rose

Sputtering and fluttering

It's a blur against the plastic

Moves like an arachnid spastic

Clickety clack clack click click

It's almost done, one more

Alphanumeric

It's hysterical

The rate at which it runs along

Back and forth, to and fro

Tears asunder muscle, bone

Clickety clack my sinew said

Just one more.

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# TALLIES

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L I A N A R O D R I G U E Z

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Things did not begin in the living room this time.

I was in the kitchen getting a drink when I heard her come in. I didn't look up. It would have been more strategic to take a bullet to the face than to look into her pushy verdant eyes. I couldn't help thinking how slimy women are. Can be. Whatever. Slithering in and out of all the damp crevices which make up your life.

I think it's easy to feel threatened by something that doesn't move like you do. Humans move as if they've spent their whole lives not knowing they have bendable limbs and joints, like they just found out last week. We're too scared to have legs. And even if we weren't, we're too drunk to use them for anything besides kicking.

Women are different.

"Look at you, pouring a teeny tiny sip of lemonade into a glass. It's like you never drank out of the carton before."

"It's not a glass."

She moved in just close enough to throw her bag on the sofa. If we had been keeping score - which I was - this one would have already been a tally towards her before it even got started.

"Hmm?"

"It's not a glass; it's a mug."

The TV chair at the other end of the room would be too obvious. The couch would be too defenseless. The bar stool? Would she choose a seat so close to me? These are the things I wondered while she left her trail around my place - where she'll sit, what the hell she's trying to prove, what I need to be ready for. What kind of person she wants me to be this time.

The process took longer than real seconds measured on a clock. Like a conversation that consists of lies takes longer than one which consists of truth.

All this time, I thought snakes were venom-

ous; I thought they were quick to jerk out their heads and latch onto your flesh like it was barely there and tear your entire life apart in a minute and a half. I waited to see if I was wrong. Real seconds measured on a clock are different from a liar's seconds.

"Did you call your mom today?"

I never would have guessed the floor in front of the couch. How could someone be unpredictable and predictable at the same time? How is a woman something else too?

"I called, no answer. I think she's still in the halfway house. It's impossible to get through to anyone there over the phone."

"Mmm. Nothing's impossible, hun."

"Yeah... I'll try again tomorrow."

She had squeezed her cell phone out of her pocket some time during my brief justification. It was impossible to win because it was impossible to keep her attention, so that even if

I did win this time, she wouldn't even notice. Gone for a month, and now here, telling me the impossible was possible.

She turned on the TV and put in the earphones to her iPod, a pair of actions which I will never understand. I closed the fridge and leaned my elbows on the counter, pretending to watch The Kardashians play tennis while I tried to make sense of the disconnection happening before me in real time.

There couldn't have been a more perfect moment for what came next. My cell phone vibrated from across the room. It was sitting pretty, right on the couch cushion next to her head. I knew who it was. I knew that she couldn't hear the cacophony in my head with all the cords coming out of her, but she could hear the light vibration of a cell phone against a soft surface. She didn't even hesitate. A green snake in the grass. The grass itself.

"Hello? Hi, angel, how're you doing? Mmm. I know. Yeah, she's right here. I'll put her on. Feel better,



hun- It's your mom."

She tossed the phone at me without looking up. She had told me already that she wouldn't console me if I wasn't willing to take responsibility. I wanted to ask her what kind of responsibility a murderer takes, but I didn't have it in me. I could never quite catch the phone like she could throw it. I left the room, then surrendered to the humid almost-morning, just to take the call.

\* \* \*

I woke up to find her gone, but her bag still in its precarious place on my couch. Our couch? The stupid couch with the indefinite owner. I took the opportunity to stare it down, like an inanimate part of her could at once come alive and lecture me about responsibility and family loyalty. Her earphones and iPod were gone. I had forgotten that she liked to run in the morning.

I started to make breakfast when I heard her

come in and the house alarm go off. I was about to go shut it off, but she beat me to it. I couldn't even ask. When the hell did I give her the code to my house alarm? Our personal monologues overlapped, like everything else in our lives.

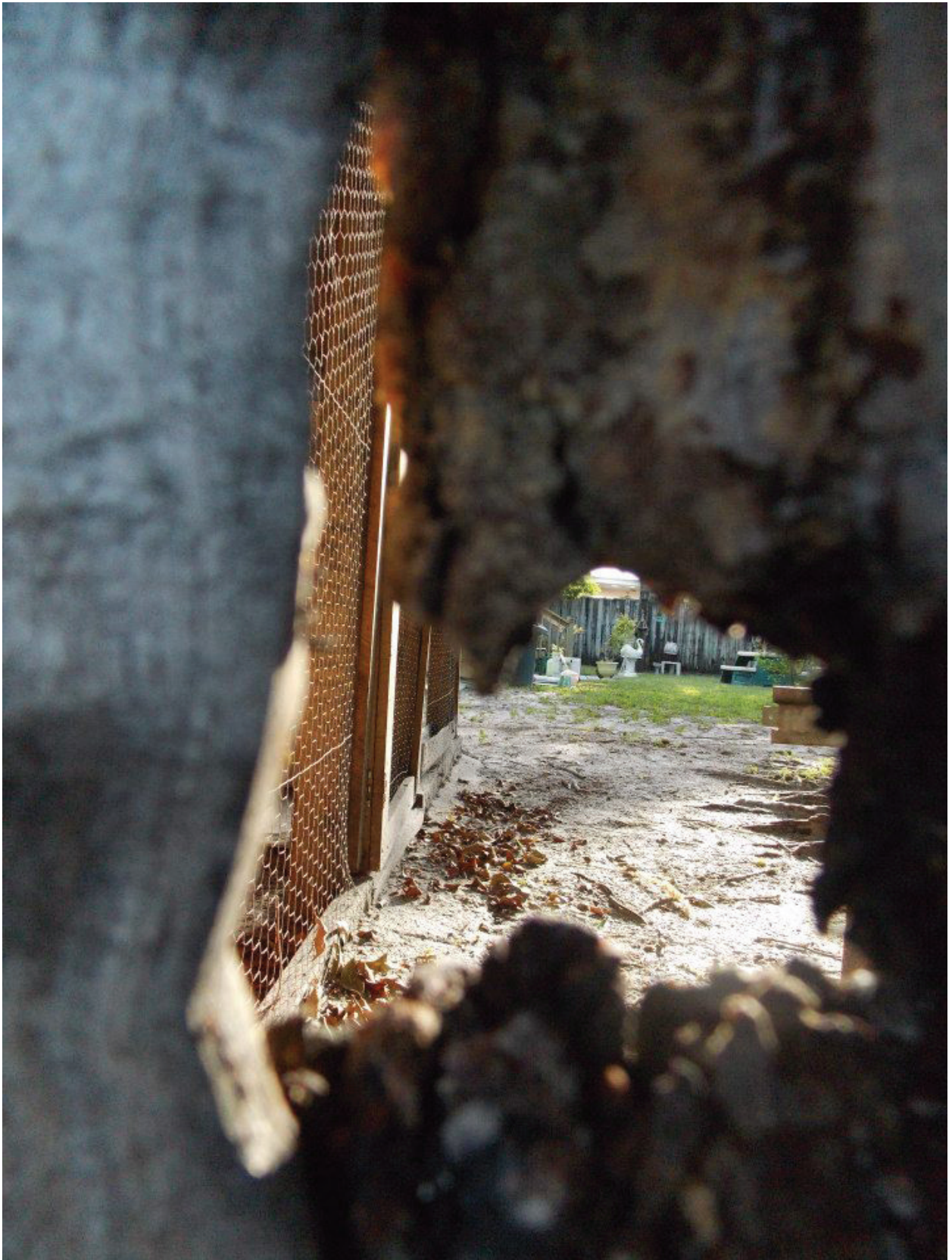
"How was your talk last night?"

"How was your run?"

Like six-year-olds throwing rocks at each other. Like a school child crush gone wrong and for too long. Like the dumb little boy who separates from the rest of the group at the zoomer and walks right into the snake pit just because he can. She was always the first to get it out. Did she have the most to say or was silence just her only weakness?

"It was alright. You have funny neighbors."

So the couch was hers, but the neighbors were mine. I briefly wondered how long that would last. She never failed to do exactly what she wanted to do. To hell with the neighbors. She never called me



Gabriela Gomez- Vanishing Point

funny in her life.

We got through breakfast like we always had, me standing and her sitting at the counter. As I cleaned up I could hear the shower run, and without warning, always without warning, the sound of the front door opening and closing. The crunch of the locks turning – the kind of noise you could hear from anywhere in the house. I didn’t look back to check if her bag was still in its place on her couch. I squeezed my cellphone out of my pocket and dialed a number I wasn’t sure would get me anywhere. When it did, the bag or the couch didn’t matter anymore.

For the first time, things began and began again in the kitchen.

\* \* \*

“Where you off to?”

“Out.”

I threw a few things into a bag in the bedroom I couldn’t come to assign ownership to. I fumbled with a pair of jeans, as always. She was so

much better at packing than I could ever hope to be.

“Vacation?”

She made herself comfortable on the open-ended bed, checking my bag to make sure I had packed everything I would need. She didn’t need to know where I was going to know what I needed. I didn’t even know what I needed. I swear she went to bed every night with a loaded question under her pillow.

“No.”

“Can I come?”

She could have disarmed me with an exhale. She was beyond venom at this point.

“She’s in the hospital. I’m gonna go see her, maybe stay over a couple days.”

“Your mom?”

“Yeah. Lock the door if you leave.”

I wasn’t nearly done, but I zipped up the bag and tried to leave as smoothly as possible. I could always buy a toothbrush on my way there.

"I'm going with you."

"It's fine."

"Great. I'm still going."

"She's fine. I talked to her on the phone. I'm just gonna be there a couple days."

"She'll be happy to see me... unlike you."

The bag had been slipping off my shoulders. I couldn't focus on making a smooth exit with her oozing all over the place, making me constantly slip up.

Take the bus if you wanna come."

"Wow. Bitch mode."

Bitch mode.

"I had told her you left. A month ago. Then you had to go pick up the fucking phone last night. Make me look like a fucking moron."

"Why did you tell her I left?"

"Because you did."

I could feel it being drawn slowly.

"I was gone -"

"For a month. It wasn't just in and out. You left."

White chalk on the blackboard only I could see. The one I had time to make up while she was out running.

"I'm not explaining this to my mom while she's strung out on a hospital bed. I'll be back in a couple days. Stay here. Or whatever, leave. Just don't follow me."

I left my bedroom door opened - a certain kind of invitation in my mind and a completely different kind in hers. I was at the end of the hallway, but I still heard her. The cacophony had finally left my head.

"Fine."

A tally only I could see. It sat in the passenger seat as I made my way to the hospital, endlessly sharper than the stupid fucking serpent's tooth.



# RAMSES MACHADO



La Gran Partida





Casi Esta El Bocao





Ani Gonzalez - Gamut of Sight

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# UNDERSTUDY

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V A N E S S A   H E R N A N D E Z

The summer memory that never dies  
I worked long and hard to forget the time  
It sped up like a play; I forgot my line  
She saw right through me- It was easy with lies  
There are lonely, faraway stars in disguise  
I had you standing up against the wall  
Don't really know where to go in the cold  
Cut the seams. I'll unlock like a door  
She can't break it down, or else she'd fall  
But this isn't something I won't rehearse anymore:  
"In some ways, I miss those days-  
It's strange, I wanted you to stay:"  
These are lines I'll never hear you say.  
Four hands, and then away.

*INSPIRED BY INSTANT CRUSH BY DAFT PUNK*



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# OH, WELL

X A V I E R L O P E Z

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If procrastination was worth a damn

I'd be conversing with the devil going down

I'd be making a trip to hell. A hundred grand

in my pocket for being the singer of a band

who was supposed to drop an album two months ago. No sounds

if procrastination was worth a damn.

No lie, I'll be the motherfucking man with hands

filled with money surrounded by friends all around.

I'd be making a trip to the bank. A hundred pans

in the kitchen, I'd be a world renowned chef serving out of a can

Ooops! I forgot to make the meal. Make cakes by the ounce, not by the pound

if procrastination was worth a damn

I'd be president of a state with a nation in my command.

Improvise a speech I should have remembered. I'd readily astound  
the people, make a trip to the history books, conquer a hundred lands

I wouldn't be unemployed, failing in school, evicted from my apartment and  
in trouble with the law for missing a few court dates, prison bound

If procrastination was worth a damn --

Instead, I'm making a trip to the grave for a hundred grand

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# PREY

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B I A N C A   R O D R I G U E Z

He went cool and green.

Spring reflected in his face,

limbs collected peacefully.

All around: the strangers

gathering like moss on stone,

gathered around him.

“How lucky to be loved,”

called the nurses,

in stations like flowerbeds.

I, in my work clothes, tired

and bitter. Staring down into

his face. All around me springtime vultures.







---

# DAY OFF

H U G O F O N S E C A

---

Alarm goes off. Roll out

of bed. Stand

in shower. Contemplate self. Take two

Zolofts. Check email. Nothing

new. Eat apple. Gulp down coffee. Scorch

tongue. Zolofts

take

effect. Smoke a cigarette. Check email.

Nothing new. Feed birds.

Tell self to be

productive.

Stare at blank Word

document. Try to write. Don't write.

Take two (of Dad's)

Xanax. Wash down with

beer. Jitter, spasm, vomit.

Collapse. Jolt off

floor. Stare at blank Word document.

Watch Snow White. Again.

and again. Check email.

Spam. Drink beer. Eat old pizza. Still

cold. Try to write. Close laptop. Lay

in bed.

Twist. Turn. Tangle.

Cuss loudly. Take two (of Mom's)

Prozac. Set

alarm. Sleep. Wake up before alarm.

*After "Deathwork"*

*by Donald Hall*



Milton Moreno- Grace

# NELSON



Cthiaroscuro



# DEVESA



Saturare



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# Ego

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E L I Z A B E T H   S A A V E D R A

If you stood back far enough  
you could see the entire process.  
You would be still in all the progress.  
All the determination for your affixations.  
Soon you'll see that you will one day be just like him, her, and me.  
You'll know why you're there and not here.  
Why you always ran two steps ahead.  
Why you sometimes decided to stay in bed.  
Now, here you are, you're Only here and you're here now.  
You climbed the mountain and fell from the top  
you thought you lost it all, but you almost forgot  
that you couldn't take it with you from the start  
your endless voyage to the top of your thoughts  
forcing and pushing through the rocks. To go further than they ever thought.  
Soon you'll see what you couldn't conceal, that none of it was ever real.



Sadiel “Speedy” Ruiz - Encounter

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# LEAN

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B I A N C A   R O D R I G U E Z

She learned to live a lean life, always moving with the world at her back and in her arms: sparse parcels, bare essentials, one or two mementos. Memories were heavy and overpriced, so these she discarded as soon as she was able, keeping only those that might double as bargaining chips down the line.

When the road finally beat Desiree down to a dusty, worn slip of a woman, she settled. The place was on the fourth floor of an apartment building with an elevator that always seemed out of order. She set up house the a pay to use laundry room, behind the row of machines that, like the tiny elevator that rattled and always, without fail, got stuck on the third floor, were also out of order. She picked the building because the landlord was a busy man whose pothead son never bothered to check on the geriatric residents whose rent always came on time (many times, long after they themselves had expired) and because there were mangoes in the courtyard. On the day that she moved in, she found a ripe, fat, orange and pink one lying bruised on the pavement. She took it with her

to her new place, across from an old woman who smelled like a nursing home. When she could spare it, she tossed a piece of canned meat to the cats that milled about the old lady's door, lean ferals with cut muscles that stood up like tumors under their dusty fur.

Desiree smelled the same thing on the old lady that the cats did. She loitered some days too, never begging, only winding around the woman's heart until the old lady let her in. Twice a week, Desiree would bring the old woman her mail, careful to pick out the few advertisements and threats that came addressed to herself. Typically, the old woman would offer Desiree food: old tuna cans, expired pudding, stale crackers.

"I'm alright—Soon as I get my settlement, I'll be fine." Desiree would say, backing out of the run down, geriatric apartment, but lingering at the door. "Wairtaminute." The old woman left Desiree at the threshold, disappearing into a home fat with memories, bogged down with relics of dissolved family ties,

twice forgotten lives, and a dust that clung to everything like an old shaggy throw. It was the shuffle off her feet that gave her away before she turned down the hall and came back into sight, clutching a five dollar bill in her arthritic grasp.

“This way you can go into town to look for a job. While you’re there, you might as well forward your mail here. You’ll never know when the case is won if you can’t get your letters.”

She thanked the old woman and they shared a few more moments in the doorway. Desiree told her of the daughter she lost, and the old woman spoke of her own children, David in Wichita and Monica still in New Mexico. They ate mangos at the threshold until the heat drove the old woman inside.

It was Desiree who realized it first. She and the cats had a nose for it. By then there were no more mangos and the tree that stood out in the courtyard was no longer dressed in bright reds and warm oranges. The Wednesday after the old woman got her social security checks, Desiree knocked on her door,

a stack of magazines and mail under an arm.

It was the lack of shuffling that did it.

Desiree called the ambulance from a payphone and they broke down the door to find the old woman stuffed stiff in a broken down recliner that reeked of piss and stale perfume.

The ferals scattered at the heavy footed paramedics lugging a gurney up four flights. Desiree paced like a big cat in a small cage, but did not leave. When the neighbors from two doors down, a pair of strung out 20 year-olds, edged out of their apartment and asked what had happened, eyeballing the broken down door and the pawnable splendors inside, Desiree sized them up and told them not to bother.

It was technically the first day of winter, the day the letter came from the attorney’s office. It was 94 degrees out, and the four flights of stairs felt like forty. She took them two steps at a time, her heart racing from a lifetime of smoking and the prospect of having it easy.



Shakily, she walked to the door of her home and sat at the threshold, tearing open the envelope and unfolding the letter within. It said, in so many words, that the case was lost. She stopped bothering with the mail.

He never would have realized she was there, tucked away behind a row of washing machines, living on an old cot, like an island of familiarity in a sea of cold, dirty tile. She kept her clothes in a neat pile next to her bedding, and set on top of a box that served as a nightstand, the photograph of a small child, and a pack of cigarettes. It wasn't until the old woman's social security checks stopped clearing that the landlord's son made the trip to the fourth floor. He found Desiree there, leaning against the old lady's busted up front door, taking long, slow drags of a cigarette. Her legs were drawn up to her chest, bare feet flat against the dirty floor. She had her fingers laced through the fur of some shabby tom cat. He practically scruffed her. Picked her up by her collar and onto her feet. The tom cat took off and

watched wearily from the stairs, ears flattened against his large misshapen head. She tried to explain that she was only guarding the old lady's treasures; that she didn't trust the people from down the hall, but he didn't listen.

He upturned her altar to the small child she knew for only a year but loved for half a lifetime, shoved the portrait and the cigarettes into the cardboard nightstand, and made her roll up her cot. The pothead son had a man come to latch up the laundry room and install a new front door where the old woman used to live.

That night, she had again the world at her back and in front of her, a living sea of headlights. All around a cold restlessness. Desiree's shadow twisted on the pavement as the cars went by. She walked towards the lights, nothing in her arms, longing for the taste of mangoes.



Milton Moreno - Homunculus

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# BELL

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M A N U E L R O M E R O

I walked through the streets in a daze after I quenched my thirst. I gazed at the destruction around. It has been said that death is the great equalizer. I couldn't help but think that a barbarian horde is just as effective. I gazed at the blood stained corpses, piled on top of each other on the cobbled street. The air was saturated with the sweet smell of raw meat, accompanied by the pungent smell of excrement. Many were missing limbs, and the faces were the worst part. Frozen in terror; their last moments on this plane had not been kind.

Flies and rats feasted on the corpses, multiplying, it seemed the city would not remain empty for long. I tried to keep my nose plugged, and breathe through my teeth to keep the flies out. The buzz, and the hiss of the rats was deafening, drowning out the low moans of the few living that grieved for the dead. It was the year 250 of the Nebradian family's rule. When the city's warning bells tolled, the bass tintinnabulation an alarm to all inside her walls that Melrune was under siege. I escaped

the carnage by hiding inside a crawlspace behind a bookshelf in the Great Library. The crawl space was used to store some of the more common and less valuable books in the library's collection. It was there, crammed between the stacks of dusty tomes of old stories, and nameless poetry, I hid.

I was awake for three days. I feared some small noise or unconscious movement would give away my location. On the third day, I heard them drag a girl near my hiding place. By this time the library had already been breached, all its riches meant nothing to the invaders. They took only the gold, toppled shelves, and burnt what they wanted. The girl they dragged inside screamed, and raged, demanding to be returned to her family. She was a haughty thing. Didn't last long, I didn't even hear her last words. They brought a second girl, not long after. This one cried, pleading to be set free. I heard her scream, and the pitch of the crying rose. Maybe she saw the last girl they brought in, who knows. They kept her alive. She would regret that, and so would I.

The sound of ripping clothing, and rough laughter was all I could hear for a few seconds, and then I could hear her once more. Her cries were muffled as she begged again to be returned to her family, there was more laughter. After a while the pleas of the young girl changed to moaned prayers for death, accompanied by the baritone grunts of the men. It was a dark harmony. I began to discern when a new man had taken his turn by the sound of his voice. There were at least five with her; it went on for hours until I stopped keeping track for my sake.

I slept, or shut down would have been a more appropriate term. When I came to, the noises had ceased and I dared to exit the crawlspace to search for water. The body of the first girl was tossed on the top of a quartz counter. Ivory limbs dangled off, swaying with the breeze entering through the open doors and broken windows. Her brazier, and blouse were torn and her breasts were exposed to the morning air. Golden hair cascaded in curls from her head, and lay like a veil over her face, giving her the impression of

sleep. Her marble skin was flawless in the day's early light, had it not been for the grizzly gash across her throat she would have been beautiful. The flies were beginning to gather at her throat. The second girl was nowhere in sight, I prayed she met a swift end. No soul should suffer a life such as that. I covered the body in my coat and dragged her outside. I closed and barred the doors as best I could.

My limbs felt like dead weight as I made my way to the Librarian's wing. My chamber's door and its plaque were a welcome sight. The plaque I lovingly polished every morning on my way to my duties was smeared in blood across my name: Marcus Thorne, Third Assistant Librarian. All my personal books had been tossed across the room, trampled in the search for what little money I had. I piled my books and crawled into bed, my dusty and blood speckled uniform soiled the bedding I lay atop. I drifted into a fitful sleep; my life had become a nightmare, one I would not soon wake from.



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# DOWN TIME

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J O E L   B R I T O

It is not easy I thought, gazing out the window within the cab, at the blurring shapes and lines of stucco walls, brick and concrete. The faceless and colorful bodies of people and oblong green of trees whizzing by.

It is not easy, living a lie, deceiving all whom one meets. “This is my wife,” I would say with a false smile and jaw clenched tight. The marriage was an arranged one, as was customary, and anyone who was anyone had their marriage established by their parents. The facade has lasted longer that I would have imagined and thankfully has not been without respite, for my work carries me long and far from the swelling breast of my “beloved” and her idiosyncratic frailty.

Alas, this also meant that I would be apart from him, he who shared my humor and sorrow. He who stood at my wedding and was enraged, as I

spoke my vows of holy matrimony and whom had my heart, dearest Richards.

We met in our youth and became close friends, Richards and I. Gazing at the newest models of cabs and trains, it fascinated us, the mechanical wonders of the day, all powered by coal and steam. It thrilled us to no end; we’d spent our summer days wandering through showrooms, eyeing the sleek gun-metal black and bulky shapes of the newest models.

By the time my family had bought me my first set of wheels, I was more than ecstatic, the first thing I did was call Richards and whisk him away on an adventure, traveling as far as the engine would take us. We ended up at the magic hedge, a secluded park overlooking Lake Michigan, its surface pristine like a looking glass, reflecting the blue-violet of the sky and flaming red of the horizon. I cut the engine and asked him to open the glove compartment, he

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did. His mouth twitched up at one side as he reached in and pulled out a rolled marijuana cigarette, lit it with a match and took a puff, and passed to me. Then we sat there in silence, smoking, with our view upon the lake, until the scent of burnt flora drifted away. I looked upon him, and it hit me; I realized what this feeling in my chest meant. He met my silent stare with a smile in his eyes, and since then we had each known, that ours was a taboo.

Richards stayed near my side ever since. He was my best man at my wedding years later, furious and drunk was he in the months afterward, at this “Harlot” he called her, who stole me away, even though I told him time and again that she would never have me as he did. That was years ago, and now he is still by my side; although as of late, he seems to have gotten fed up, becoming angry at the mere mention of my wife.

He now works for the communications office and does well for himself. “Mr. Mallard...Mr. Mallard..MR MALLARD!” Yelled the cabbie, I looked around and noticed that the cab had stopped moving, it seems I had arrived at my destination, the train station.

“My apologies, sir, you caught me in a daydream.” I grabbed hold of my umbrella and travel sack and clambered out of the cab. I was to investigate a mechanical failure with the engine of the Transatlantic, an older model train that was the first of its kind.

Once I made my way through the arched gates and into an atrium brimming with people, I spied a telephone booth beyond a gaggle of tourists visiting the city. I wound my way through and placed a call to Richards, and I told him that I had arrived and would take the better part of the day to finish my inspection. I set to work, finding Mr. Cladstine, the

station custodian near the ticket queue. He spied me and beckoned me to follow a young fellow in overalls covered in grease.

We set along through metal doors on hinges that squeaked too loudly and along a dirty hall that seemed to stretch into forever, finally we crossed through another door and there she was, the Transatlantic. A fossil, the pioneer of the modern coal engine, black, and glossy, the chimney stack with a large lip and narrowing toward the base, covered in soot, the area smelled of burnt wood and oil, and in the distance I heard a high pitched whistle, the sound of a locomotive en route to make a stop.

After several hours of backbreaking work to dismantle the components of the transatlantic, I isolated the problem to a faulty gear shift and a cracked pipe. I made my estimate to the owner of the station and made arrangements with my company to order

a new set of parts. The next few days would be full of sweat and grease.

For the moment, my job was complete, and I was ready to go home. The cab ride home took longer than I had anticipated. There were many police cars and ambulances blazing by, their claxons like a eerie shriek. It took hours to find a clear path and the clouds grew dark.

Finally the cab stopped near in front of my home, night had befallen, and the rain had not let up since I left the station. I paid the cabbie \$3.45, what an outrageous payment; the price of fuel was rising quickly. As I pulled my umbrella and sack with me, I fumbled somewhat, balancing them in my right hand while fishing my keys out of my travel jacket. There were three cars in front of my home, one of them was Richards's. I wondered what was going on as I splashed my way through the muck, up the steps of my porch and inserted the key.

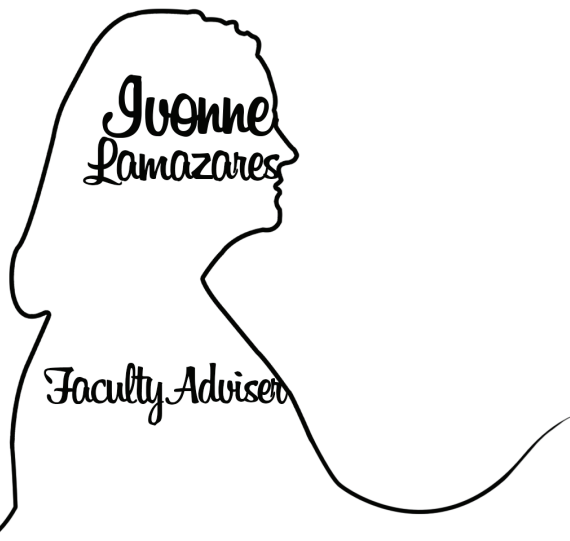
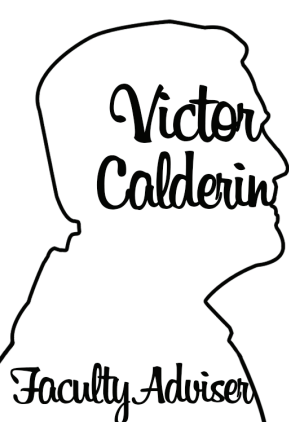
*After The Story of an Hour by Kate Chopin*





Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz - Olympia





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# AWARDS

## V O L U M E V I

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### National Awards

Gold Circle awards, Columbia Scholastic Press Association

3rd Place, Photography: Portfolio of work, Jorge Cura

2nd Place, Literary portfolio page design, Sadiel Ruiz

3rd Place, Literary portfolio page design, Sadiel Ruiz

Certificate of Merit, Literary Multi-page presentation page design, pages 68-73, Sadiel Ruiz

Certificate of Merit, Open (free) form poetry, Neylin Castillo, "Marks"

Certificate of Merit, Essays, Atara Marko, "Shulamit's journey"

Certificate of Merit, Literary Magazine overall design, Elizabeth Fernandez and Sadiel Ruiz

Certificate of Merit, General use of typography throughout magazine, Elizabeth Fernandez and Sadiel Ruiz

### Regional Awards

Community College Humanities Association-Southern Division

3RD Place, Literary Magazine Competition Awards

### State Awards

Florida College System Press Association

General Excellence, Fourth consecutive year

1st Place, Best Cover, Jorge Cura

1st Place, Best Art Works, Annie Gonzalez

1st Place, Best Individual Art, Annie Gonzalez

1st Place, Best Contents Page, Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz

1st Place, Best Editing, Elizabeth Fernandez

1st Place, Best Staff Page, Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz

2nd Place, Design, Elizabeth Fernandez and Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz

2nd Place, Fiction, Elizabeth Fernandez

3rd Place, Non-fiction, Atara Marko

3rd Place, Poem, Neylin Castillo

Inner Circle of Excellence, Elizabeth Fernandez and Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz

(Given to students who won 3 or more awards)

Special Award: Debora Vazquez Memorial Award in Poetry, Bianca Rodriguez

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# COLOPHONE

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## Production Notes

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## Editorial Policy

*Café Cultura* is produced once a year by students enrolled at Miami Dade College Hialeah Campus. Students submit their work to [cafecultura@mdc.edu](mailto:cafecultura@mdc.edu). Magazine staff members remove names and identifiers and then select the pieces for the publication.

*Café Cultura*'s mission is to provide Miami Dade College Hialeah Campus students with an outlet for their creative output in the literary, visual, and musical arts.

Opinions and views expressed by the artists or authors do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, the advisers, or Miami Dade College.



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# THANK YOU

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