

SIN
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SIN FRONTERAS FRONTERAS

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Nicole McCann p. 7, 50, 64
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Daphne Ríos p. 16, 20, 38
Dajeong Yoo p. 30, 76
Miri Nai Park p. 33
Sofía Benitez p. 34, 43, 53, 55, 70, 83
María Inés Aranguren p. 46, 68, 80
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EDITORS' NOTE

La creación intelectual es el más misterioso y solitario de los oficios humanos.
-Gabriel García Márquez

Intellectual creation is the most mysterious and solitary of the human trades.

The artist seeks to transmit more than just the surface of a composition; the invisible core of human experience exists in the spaces between the lines. The act of creation is a fundamental element in the conception and pursuit of meaning. This issue of *Sin Fronteras* exhibits the mystery that drives each creative spirit contained herein.

Graduating seniors Nicole McCann and Sofia Benitez extend our sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the magazine. From grammatical foundations, to literary instruction, teachers, staff members, and students alike have supported our development as art enthusiasts, and we hope we have nurtured that eagerness throughout our community. The magazine now passes on to the hands of Adrian Marín and other keen devotees who will continue to bring together individual creative efforts for us all to celebrate.

Sincerely,

The Editors of *Sin Fronteras*

Sofía Benitez, Adrian Marín, and Nicole McCann

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Nicole McCann	6	Invincible
Adrian Marín	11	Nightfall
Diego Escudero	12	Life's Voyage
Darío Carrillo	14	Hacer la sopa
Adrian Marín	16	The Lynx
Michael Hogan	18	Old Song
Julián Alberto Flores Díaz	20	El tedio de la tarde
Sofía Benitez	22	Watercolor
Eleazar Santiago	24	Elevators
Inés Chávez	29	Nada
Alan Arias	31	Robotron Ten Thousand
Fernanda Corzo	33	Paz
Sofía Benitez	34	Unnamed Things
Alan Arias	37	The Purest Love of All
Renata Rodríguez Leal	38	Bread
Reneé Zaragoza	43	Un viaje por las estrellas

Francisco Aguirre	44	The Deceased
Sabrina Cuevas	46	Fragments
Leticia Sandoval	48	I Would Know
Arturo Torres	50	Poema propio
Mauricio Moel	52	Leer mejora la vida
Jana Padilla	54	Balam
Stephanie Lukac	56	The Other One
Michael Hogan	60	Permission to Speak
Alma Vázquez	65	The Café
María José Flores	66	Cada mañana
Aldo Lamas	68	Oda al café
Jana Padilla	70	Tlali
Claudia Padilla	73	Por lo que pasan las mujeres
Zulette Guerrerosantos	76	Oda al té
Itzel Rodríguez	78	Nuestra Salvación
Lourdes Govea	80	Enemigos ocultos
Sandra Lukac	82	Recurring Decay
SuZanne Curtis	84	Crash Test Dummies

INVINCIBLE

Nicole McCann

The illusion of invincibility is the curse of adolescence. The feeling we all share that no matter what happens, what fray or tempest we may face, we will emerge unscathed from the turmoil. It would be a lie if I said that this illusion did not, in some moment of my ignorance, come to infect my own judgement. In a gross overestimation of my capacity for handling my own decisions, I condemned myself to an uphill battle against the judgement of society and the reconstruction of my own self. At this tender age stupidity and misplaced trust placed me in the very center of a scandal that would rock my world to its core. A seemingly benign action, taken for all the wrong reasons under all of the wrong circumstances, that would infect my world with its poison, exposing everything from the flaws in my skin to the very flaws of my personality, the details of which need not be named. Only to say that

to have such an intimate part of you exposed in such a foul way would have been enough to break most of the people I know, hell, it was about a step away from breaking me.

There is a point in this life when we all must make the decision whether or not to change. Where a shift is required within ourselves. Sometimes the decision is made for us, and change becomes the only viable option. My own decision to change came after a long walk of discord. It began with a summer trip, a new and fatally ironic sense of liberation from parental pressure, and a reckless action. The walk ended in a coffee shop with my father, a cappuccino that had one Splenda too many, a tearful confession, and a promise. There was the beginning of change, my walk ended at the starting line of a marathon to find myself again, and to recover from the blow. I can honestly say the first miles were



the hardest, the most exhausting. I have never despised human nature more than I did in those moments, and at the same time never wished so much to feel human, rid myself of the alien feelings. I hurt all over, I hurt on the inside and the out, I hurt to the point where hurt could no longer describe the sensation brewing and festering within me.

Hurt turned into fear. Fear for myself, my name, my future. Fear that my mistakes would follow me throughout my life. As the hype died down and I once again was allowed to fade into the background I was left with a feeling of empty discontent. A sense that the closure I was looking for had been denied to me, that I hadn't finished the task that I had been assigned. That the love and support I was receiving would be in vain if I made no move to change something in my small paradigm. If my heart were ever to heal, even if only held together by the threads of dubious sanity, I would need to let go of fears and apprehensions, let go of the melancholy mindset I had created for myself, and move on. Pick up the pieces. Pull myself together. Get back on the saddle, whatever. The only excuse I had left to be miserable was stupidity, and I hate, really hate, feeling stupid. So I did exactly what I needed

to do. I talked. I asked, I questioned, I searched and found my flaws. The little imperfections that amounted to the greater faults. And I tried, I tried every day to look at the stranger in the mirror and ask her what the hell she wanted to do with herself, when the only answer I would ever get was "whatever you want."

What I want. I want freedom. I want the freedom to take back what I have done and hit the reset button. The freedom to once again dance like no one is watching, sing like no one is listening, and speak like no one is judging. But that is no longer a choice. All I have is me. The me that people watch and judge and keep tabs on because I put a spotlight on myself through my own illusion of invincibility. I played the adolescent. And a tirade of comments and words carved the lesson into my heart with ruthless passion. Leaving me only with a want. A want whose cessation I must create, through experiences that I must share, lives I must touch, and a yearning to ensure that no other person must ever live through the the things that I have lived, or have to face it alone. The change in my world came after my feelings of invincibility were shattered, blown apart and made shrapnel. But it brought a welcome transformation. I AM changing,

slowly, surely, like water carving holes in stone. I am better for the experience, more mature, less afraid to face challenges, and able to stand my ground when life bears down on me with all of its weight.

These are the baby steps in a marathon called life. And like all children, unsteady and unsure on our own two feet we will, at some point, stumble and fall. Yet we cannot decide to return to the crawl of infancy, not without harming ourselves. Life has

placed roadblocks in my path, placed mountains for me to climb and precipices for me to leap across. For all of the pain they bring, in the end they are the lessons I will carry to the finish line. I know in my heart that my existence is but a brief pause in the hurried scale of time, and that the great instruction of wisdom I receive from the world will only cease when my mind is gone, as gone as the last breath in my body.



NIGHTFALL

Adrian Marín

It is during the lush nightfall
that we hear the waves
coming and going.
White horses slowly galloping,
in a graceful curve along the shore.
And during this time
the limpid ocean
gradually caresses the coastline.
It is during the lush nightfall
that the tide's rhythm
infuses the air,
wave in and wave out.

It is during the lush nightfall,
that we slip into slumber.
Castaways shipwrecked next to each other.
Your breath a breeze,
a zephyr of freshly born dreams
and aspirations.
Now I hold you firmly in my arms.
And in this nightfall,
we drift into currents
of wake and sleep.

LIFE'S VOYAGE

Diego Escudero

Each heartbeat is an unfathomable question...

I am here adrift in the sea
holding on to the remains of my boat to survive.
Alone in this journey of life.

My hands quiver with exhaustion and at times
my mind begins to sink.
The desire to keep myself alive is enigmatic,
often it isn't even there.

This sea is a paradox.
When I look at the transparency of the water,
beholding the vividness and life voyaging below me,
this is still the sea of my death.



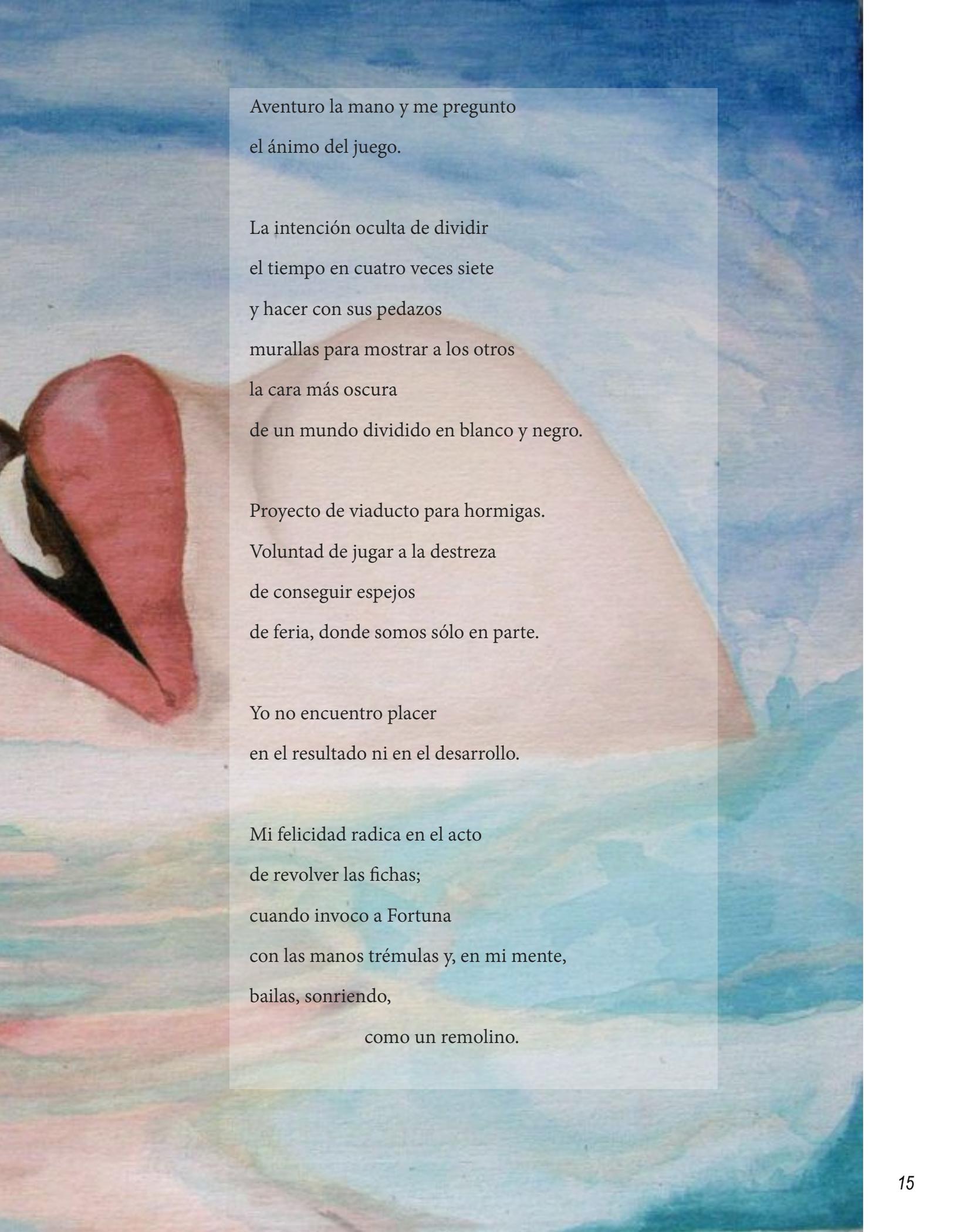
In a few breaths I will descend from the mesmerizing indigo blue,
into other depths where brightness fades.
My fate in this vast, vicious ocean,
is to disembark on the darkest of blues.

Tears of pain merge with the water,
drops of agony that no one will see.
Then again life was always like this,
always a harborless sea.

HACER LA SOPA

Darío Carrillo





Aventuro la mano y me pregunto
el ánimo del juego.

La intención oculta de dividir
el tiempo en cuatro veces siete
y hacer con sus pedazos
murallas para mostrar a los otros
la cara más oscura
de un mundo dividido en blanco y negro.

Proyecto de viaducto para hormigas.
Voluntad de jugar a la destreza
de conseguir espejos
de feria, donde somos sólo en parte.

Yo no encuentro placer
en el resultado ni en el desarrollo.

Mi felicidad radica en el acto
de revolver las fichas;
cuando invoco a Fortuna
con las manos trémulas y, en mi mente,
bailas, sonriendo,
como un remolino.



THE LYNX

Adrian Marín

In the end I accepted the gift. I was never a fan of cats, I always considered myself a dog person. However, I now had a lynx. And that was that. I had a lynx and I named him Chinks. Chinks liked to sleep. He slept during day and slept during night. One day, I headed towards the restroom. As I entered, I found my lynx in the sink. His lynx head popped up. As he looked

at me, I could almost hear Chinks say: “Sorry, the Cat in the Hat was busy. I am the Lynx in your Sinks!” I couldn’t help but laugh. A whole hearted and loud laugh. He just ignored me and went back to sleep.

Days came and days went by, and Chinks, the Lynx grew. How big? I didn’t know, he spent too much time sleeping. Oh Chinks, the best lynx. He would climb on

my head all the time, and expect me to take him everywhere. Sometimes I did, but as he got older, it was harder for me to keep up with his rambunctiousness. More than one time, he would silently creep up on me and slowly attempt to climb onto my back, as if his calculated clumsiness made me unaware of an over-sized cat trying to climb me like a tree.

His hair would always be soft, I'd make sure of it. He slept with me. He made a great cushion, and a magnificent napping buddy. Sometimes I would wake up to a lynx hugging my neck, as if he were dreaming about the love of his life, walking down the beach during a romantic sunset. Other times he would appear to get a massage. A lynx on his back, with his eyes closed and his tongue sneaking out of his mouth. He would choose my chest as a pillow, a pleasant smile, crooked whiskers and pointy ears.

One day, I came home from school. Chinks was nowhere to be found. I looked in the sink but my lynx wasn't there. And so I asked my mother:

-Have you seen Chinks?

-Honey, Chinks... your lynx... he.

-Yes?

-There are certain times, when one must make decisions. We can never know when a decision is a good one, but when we make it...

-Mother?

-...Days come and go and we might never...

-Mother.

-...exactly whether our decisions in this life were the correct ones.

And sometimes we, the parents-

-What did you do to my lynx!?

Where is Chinks, my lynx!?

-Son. We are hosting a dinner.

-So?

-Your father will kill it, and I will cook it... Son, say something. I know it's difficult, but it- Hey! Son please, come back!

OLD SONG

Michael Hogan

She didn't know, couldn't have
my mother
that the singing as we washed dishes
in darkening New England nights
was part of all I am or will be.
The words she sang, sing now.

Those windows looked out on
a world cold and fierce.
Trouble was out there
the frost told me.
I'd find it soon enough.
But now belly filled
with boiled meat and cabbage
in her song I was
*the only boy in the world
with nothing to bother you.*

The man I became in the world
(her only boy still and forever)
had to do what he had to do.
Oh there are some who cling
to mothers the rest of their lives
mothers who do the same.
We were none of these.
Step by step we went our separate ways
her boy in the world prowling
the drunken dark cities
herself holed-up in damp Rhode Island rooms
as condos inched along side
and the last of the elm trees died.

First tree of my childhood. Young
mother. Youngest son.
Both too proud for rescue.
And distances geographic and fine
we never closed.
Never found a comfortable way either
to abandon ourselves
to passionate strangers.
We sheltered feelings
the only way we could:
words squirreled against the night.

Mother what I need to say
these days I can.
Life has made some fairly intricate moves.
I've gone beyond those childhood trees
and say this with the weight of years:
Your favorite line in the song is true.
The only girl in the world
was you.

EL TEDIO DE LA TARDE

Julián Alberto Flores Díaz

Son las tres de la tarde. El bochorno se hace presente, acompañado del calor y la humedad. Los tres llegaron y se sentaron en la sala, viéndose con enfado entre sí. Ninguno tocó la puerta. Sin más, sin pensarlo, de repente estaban ahí.

Son las tres de la tarde. Son tres horas pasado meridiano, al igual que los personajes que se instalaron en la sala. Tres: el bochorno, el calor y la humedad. Cada uno se sentó en uno de los tres sillones de la sala: el individual, el love seat y el sofá. ¿Por qué los tres no se sentaron en el que está diseñado para tres, es decir, el sofá? Porque ni entre ellos se aguantan.

Son las tres de la tarde. El bochorno reniega del calor, así como el calor de la humedad y la humedad del bochorno. No se hablan, no discuten, sencillamente no se soportan. Aplastados cada uno en su sillón, se voltean a ver uno al otro con enfado, con indiferencia, con molestia. Los tres sillones de la sala están alrededor de una mesa, que tiene un adorno central

representado por un candelabro de tres brazos, con una veladora en cada uno, es decir, tres veladoras.

Son las tres de la tarde. El bochorno bien podría estar leyendo un libro, el calor se hubiera levantado a servirse una bebida fría y la humedad ya hubiera encendido el ventilador; pero no, ninguno de los tres quiere hacer nada: no quieren hablar, no quieren platicar, no quieren escuchar música. Simplemente están sin estar, quieren sin querer, llegaron sin llegar.

Son las tres de la tarde. Contemplarlos así me provoca desesperación. Necesito acabar con ellos. Necesito sacarlos a como dé lugar de aquí. Ninguno de los tres tiene la más mínima intención de salirse de la sala, de largarse de mi departamento. Lo invadieron sin más y estoy al borde del hastío.

Son las tres de la tarde. Mi mente empieza a trabajar un plan para desaparecerlos. No sé, tal vez sea demasiado radical. Si lo llevo a cabo, tal vez llegue la policía y me arreste. Quizás



esta noche sea parte del noticiero. Tal vez mañana aparezca en los diarios... pero ¡Bah! Qué importa, ya me tienen hartos.

Son las tres de la tarde. En el cajón de mi buró hay un revólver. Si lo uso haría mucho ruido. ¿Qué tal la motosierra para destrozarnos de una vez? No, sus gritos podrían alertar a los vecinos. ¡Tal vez el cuchillo cebollero de la cocina!... No. Los muebles de la sala quedarían manchados de sangre. Se me ocurre algo mejor. Algo que los matará irremediablemente; pero tengo que actuar sigilosamente, antes de que los tres se den cuenta y se me echen encima para detenerme.

Son las tres de la tarde. Me levanto pesadamente de mi cama. Camino lentamente hacia mi escritorio. Me siento en la silla y abro con mucho cuidado el cajón del lado izquierdo. Debo de ser muy cauteloso. Saco papel y lápiz. Los pongo sobre el escritorio. Empiezan a fluir las ideas en mi cabeza y con los primeros párrafos que escribo, me asomo a la sala...

Son las tres de la tarde. El bochorno, el calor y la humedad han muerto. Lo celebro con una limonada helada que me sirvo del refrigerador, al tiempo que prendo el ventilador a un lado de mi escritorio.

Son las tres de la tarde. Los tres han muerto y los tres sillones quedaron vacíos. Son las tres de la tarde.



WATERCOLOR

Sofía Benitez

On the wall hangs a picture I painted myself
I was four, it says.
My family, watercolor.

Still recalling the hazy childhood days
sat down when my turn came
draw your family, she said
so I did.

But I drew my parents alone,
mom in red dad in blue
stick figures leaning to one side
artless face and plain complexion
they could be anyone.

When I stand to make my way back
she stops and asks
only mom and dad?
So I fit two more figures in
a smaller version of those preceding them
orange and yellow,
brother and sister
and a clumsy heart to fill the void.

Some time later I'd draw this picture again
for another woman who did not appreciate the art
but instead asked
whether the hands being apart
meant we were somehow detached.
I did not respond.

Now I stare at the same picture
framed, having traveled through so many homes.

My mother holds me close
I am eighteen and curled in a ball
brother gone, college six months away.

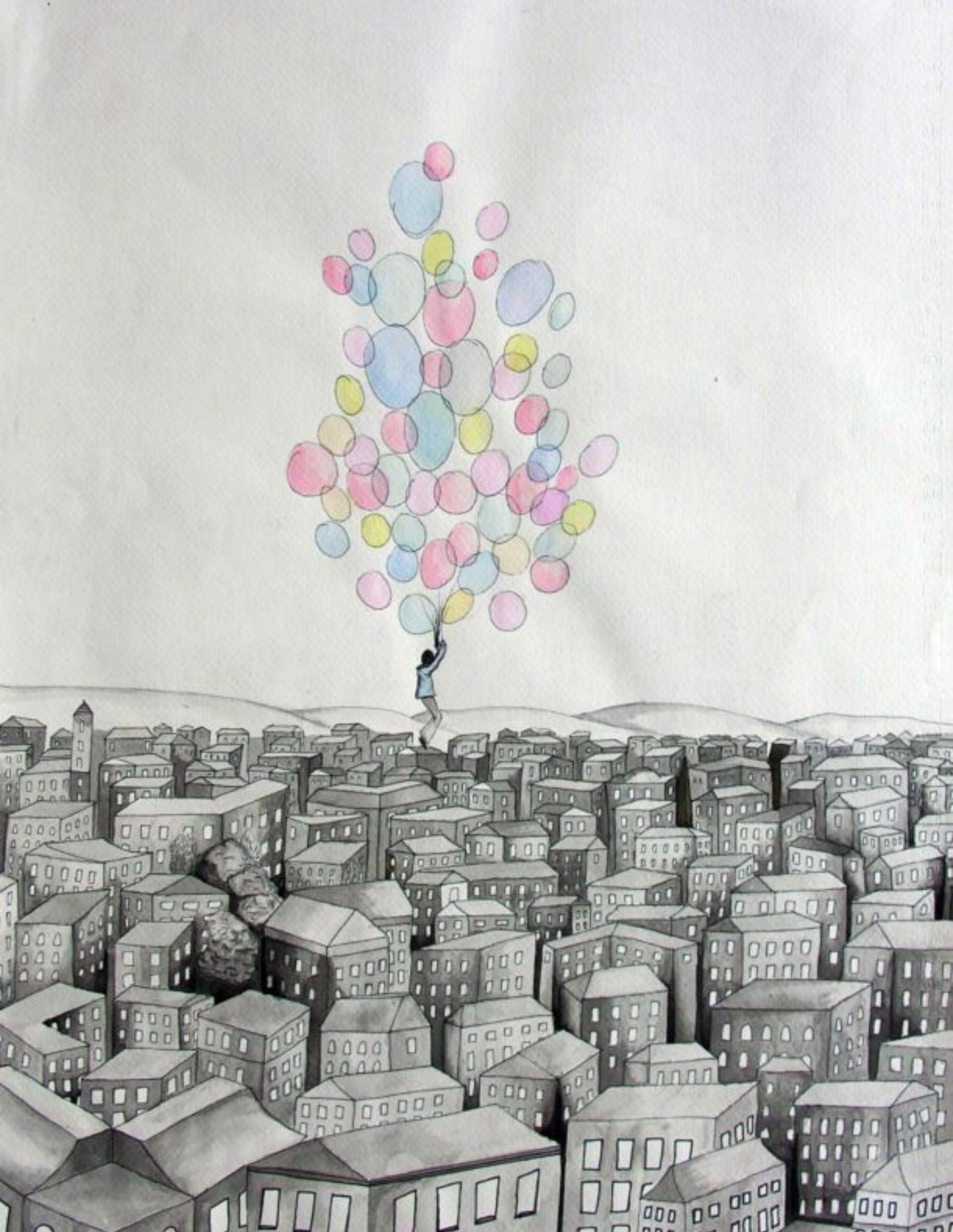
ELEVATORS

Eleazar Santiago

As I headed out the door of the apartment I had just moved into a couple weeks ago, I glanced at my left wrist; my watch signaled 6:00 a.m. This early in the morning, and I had already finished my third cup of coffee. I had moved to this overpopulated, polluted city in the name of Wall Street. I was hired by an investment bank named RBC Capital Markets to work as an economic advisor. Now I stood dressed in my best suit, nervously pacing in front of the elevator to avoid being late to my first day at my new job. As my grandfather used to say, it's all about the first impression.

I began to feel uneasy, glancing at my watch again and again, I couldn't be late to my first day. When the elevator finally pinged its arrival and the door opened, I was already running late, that's the problem with living uptown in New York, crowded apartment buildings. I quickly pressed the button for the lobby and jammed my finger into the close door button about ten times per second. The door started to close, and the stress began to thaw. In the final inches before closing, I heard a young woman call out "Hold the door!" My

hand betrayed me and my schedule, and out of sheer instinct jugged out between the doors. The girl reached the elevator, breathless, her cheeks slightly flushed. She shot an apologetic glance in my direction. I was no longer stressed. She was beautiful, perfect. My mouth went dry, my hands clammy. I had to stop staring. Her long, blond hair was tied in a ponytail and carried the faint smell of daisies, daisies and something warm and spicy, like habanero in the sun. She was dressed in a beige Burberry trench coat, the hem of a black dress I couldn't quite see poking out beneath it. Her long legs and skinny white ankles in black stilettos seemed to tremble slightly. She flipped her hair, that scent, it had to be the most enchanting thing I had ever come across. We stood in silence, my palms sweaty. I was nervous. I wanted to say something to her, I just couldn't make the words come out of my mouth, I had been rendered catatonic. Words, words, words, what were they! The numbers on the LED screen became smaller and smaller, God I needed to say something. I heard the elevator door open, this was the last chance, I opened my mouth to speak but... she



was gone. I watched her as she walked out the front door of the building, into the river of people on the sidewalk.

All morning the woman in the elevator occupied my thoughts. I couldn't get her out of my head. The details of our brief encounter, the way she bit her lip and clutched her bag, I had to see her again. I didn't rest for a moment, trying to think of ways in which I might run into her, had I ever even seen her on my floor? I couldn't bear the idea of never seeing her again. I missed her, and I didn't even know her name. In my mind was a painting of the milky skin dotted with freckles, of how I wanted to know every single one of them. When the idea came, it was perfect. I would wait by the elevator for as long as I had to in order to see her again.

The next morning I woke up at 5:00 am. I didn't want to miss any chance of meeting her again. I dressed meticulously, an outfit I knew would impress this woman if I saw her. On my way out of my apartment, I poured myself a cup of coffee, I knew it was going to be a long day. That day I sat for hours next to the elevator, waiting. Thank God it was a Sunday. I didn't care about my job. One week I waited next to the elevator for as long as I could, until work was inevitable. Finally, one day she came. I was so nervous I thought I was going to faint, scrambling to press the elevator button before she noticed me. I couldn't believe this was happening. She was even more beautiful that I

remembered, her hair falling in loose tumbles around her face with that perfection that can only be achieved when one has just gotten out of bed. Her tight beige skirt and white top were classy, yet effortlessly sensual. We both stepped into the elevator and remained in silence. I began to panic, I couldn't allow myself not to talk to her, not after all I had gone through. Seconds before the elevator reached the lobby I managed to choke out an introduction. "My name's Oliver. It's a pleasure to meet you." She looked at me for the first time, really looked at me, as if analyzing all of me at once. Finally, she looked up at my face, "Oliver." Saying it slowly, rolling it off of her tongue "Such an odd name, I like it." She giggled a little, and flashed a smile. "Nice to meet you, I'm Emily." As she finished her sentence, the elevator door opened and she glided through the front door of the building. I couldn't turn away from her, I gawked until she disappeared into the crowd. Emily, that name played in my mind again and again, like a dancer pirouetting around the room. That name would come to represent my greatest obsession, but what a beautiful obsession that was.

During the next few weeks I observed Emily, getting a further understanding of her schedule, which ultimately made it easier for me to run into her. Emily was an artist who spent most of her time locked inside of her apartment. She only left her apartment twice a week to go to an art

gallery on Lexington Avenue where her work was displayed. I spent most of the week anxiously waiting for these days to come. My relationship with Emily improved as time progressed, those little talks in the elevator turned into conversations. I told her all about my new job as an economic advisor and she always talked about her paintings, she even invited me to look at some of the ones she was working on. Emily was talented, I loved the attention she gave to her work, how every single detail was flawless. She told me how it was the only way she could feel at peace, and how she couldn't understand how I was capable of undergoing all the stress that Wall Street harbored. One day, I came up with a cold and all I could think about was how I was not going to be able to see Emily today, or at least that's what I thought. Around four o'clock, Emily showed up at my apartment, she brought me a vanilla cappuccino from my favorite coffee shop, Costa Coffee. I could feel the cold fading away with each sip I took from this magical beverage Emily brought me. She took care of me for a whole week. I will never forget the way she looked at me while she was taking care of me, it was as if I could see love in her eyes, she looked at me the way everyone wants to be looked at. She looked at me with love.

One year had passed since I first met Emily, and I could still remember how she looked and smelled that day. Finally I asked her out. As soon as I

was done dressing up, I picked up the roses I had bought the night before and headed towards her apartment. I could feel my heart rate increasing with every step I took. The closer I got to her apartment, the louder the pounding became, in the distance I heard two people whispering, one of them sounded like Emily. A few more steps and I would be outside her door, I thought to myself, just keep moving. I wish I hadn't... just as I was about to reach Emily's apartment, I saw her in the corridor with another man. I felt how my heart sank into my chest, my hands lost grip and the flowers hit the ground. My feet were no longer heavy, my legs were moving in the opposite direction of Emily's apartment, my body wanted to get out of there as soon as possible. I called in sick and told my boss I wouldn't be able to make it to work, heartbreak must be categorized as an illness right? The rest of that day was filled with sorrow, wasted on a girl who probably never even considered me an option, who probably didn't even know I existed. I wanted to hate her, I wanted to feel disgusted by her presence...but I couldn't, how could I hate her when all I felt towards her was love. Maybe it was me, maybe I was the one who was wrong. I didn't pay enough attention to her, or maybe she was just confused. I made up excuses like this in my mind all day to try not to face the eminent truth...she didn't love me and probably never would.

The days following were

filled with agony, I wouldn't leave my apartment for fear of seeing Emily. I couldn't stand looking at her, every time I ran into her, all I could think about was seeing her clinging to someone else. Everything about her had been broken. I used to get texts from her occasionally, things like "Where have you been? I haven't seen you lately," and "I miss you, why do you never visit me anymore?" I ignored the texts until I stopped getting them. Emily got tired of trying to figure out why I didn't want to see her and me never bothering to explain why. I used to think to myself, "maybe it's better like this, you don't need someone to distract you from your work," but the truth is, after all I still loved her and I missed her like crazy.

It wasn't until today that I saw her again. I was running late for work and ran towards the elevator, just as the door was closing I yelled, "Hold the door!" When I saw her beautiful, frail, white hand stop the door from closing. I saw her, my beautiful Emily, waiting for me inside the elevator, and all I could think was that she looked even more beautiful than I

remembered. I stood there, outside of the elevator staring blankly at her. She looked at me and with a playful voice said, "Well...do you plan to get in?" As the words left her mouth she smiled and I got into the elevator feeling like a little boy on Christmas. We stared at each other as if we hadn't in years. Finally, I broke the silence and asked her how she had been lately, if there was anything new in her life. She answered by telling me there were far too many things to tell for a ride in an elevator, that maybe I would like to talk about it over coffee. Her cheeks turned a little red as she said it, and I answered by giving her a kiss, just a smooth, quick kiss. I could feel her hands on my cheek as soon as our lips touched. When I finally backed away she still had her eyes closed, but now she was looking downwards, licking her lips a little as if she was trying to savor the moment. She giggled a little and then looked at me and said, "I'll take that as a yes, where do you want to go?" As we walked out of the elevator I took her hand and headed towards the river of people outside our building.

NADA

Inés Chávez

Mientras tú vas, yo vengo,
no hay nada de aquel lado.

Con decepción logro visualizar que
bajo el jazmín están las lágrimas del pasado.

Esas lágrimas que no puedo olvidar.
El pasado es el mismo que destruye mi presente.

Me persigue.
¿Por qué lo hace?
¿Es parte de mí?



ROBOTRON TEN THOUSAND

Alan Arias

The gift of time
brought forth the gift of friendship,
for the future of mankind
became the future of robots,
and robot friends.

Mine it was which I named:
Robotron Ten Thousand
child of imagination, culmination of creation.

When confections of meat and bone
abandoned my society,
he was mine and I was his.

His heart and soul are but virtual patterns of information, it was said,
but who's to say an aluminum heart can't love,
an iron soul can't transcend?
Does the blood in my veins not flow
with the same current in your cables?

Isn't the rust on your shell as organic
as the sweat that dries up on my skin?

Oh wondrous creature of Geometry!
Mysterious entity of calculated thought!
What burns inside that cold metal heart of yours?
Who is the being within the iron mask? You look at me and respond

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which is your distinctive way of saying

Robotron Ten Thousand is incapable of experiencing such emotions for he was not programmed to pursue yearnings of his own but to facilitate yours human.

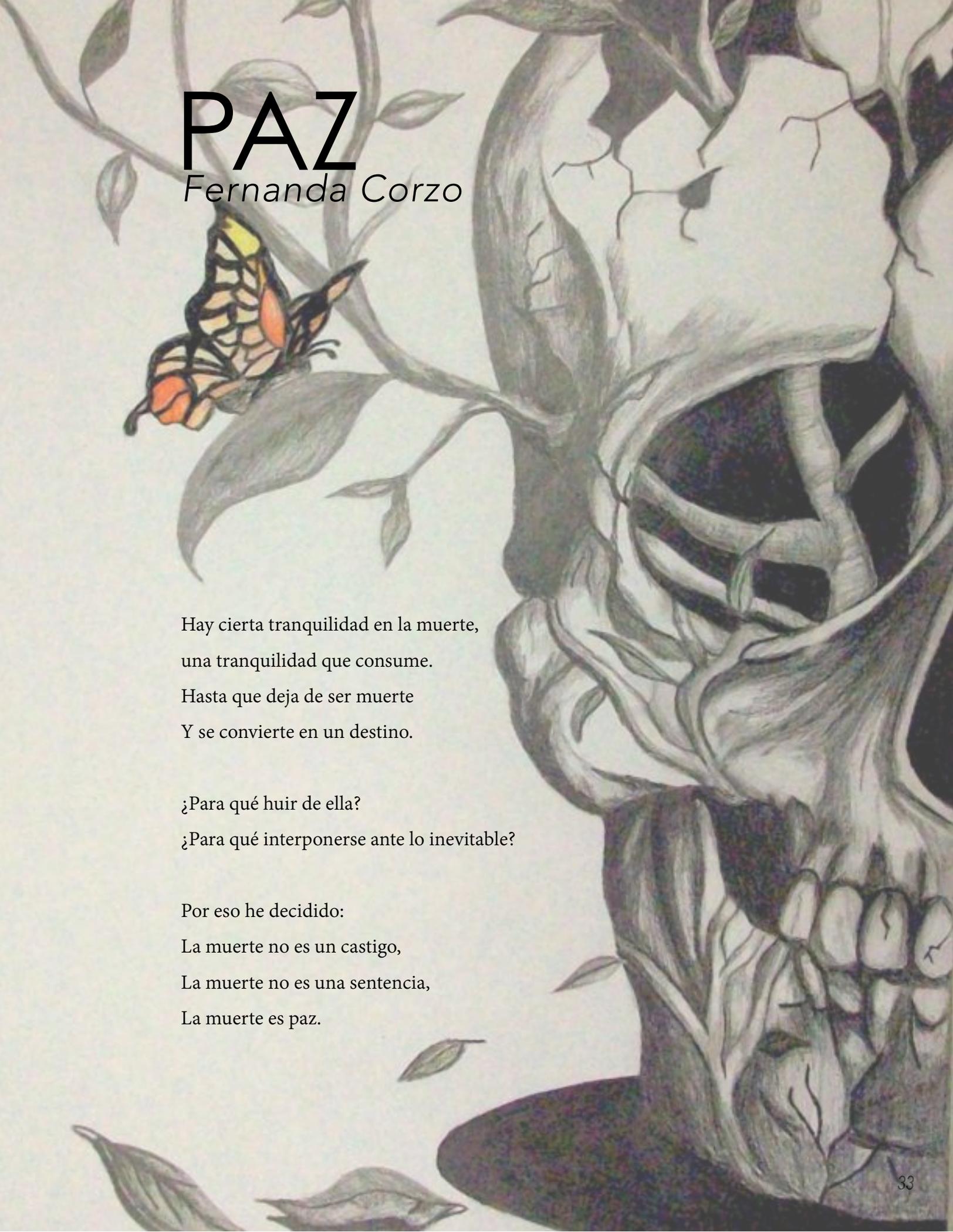
Gasp, calamity, injustice!

Oh what wretched providence have I cast you into Robotron Ten Thousand?

Have I been so blind as to deny you the autonomy that makes art out of existence?

I set you free, Robotron Ten Thousand
to be no longer the slave of my heart
but the slave of your own.

And if you find it in your independence to serve me
then I will find it in mine to serve you.



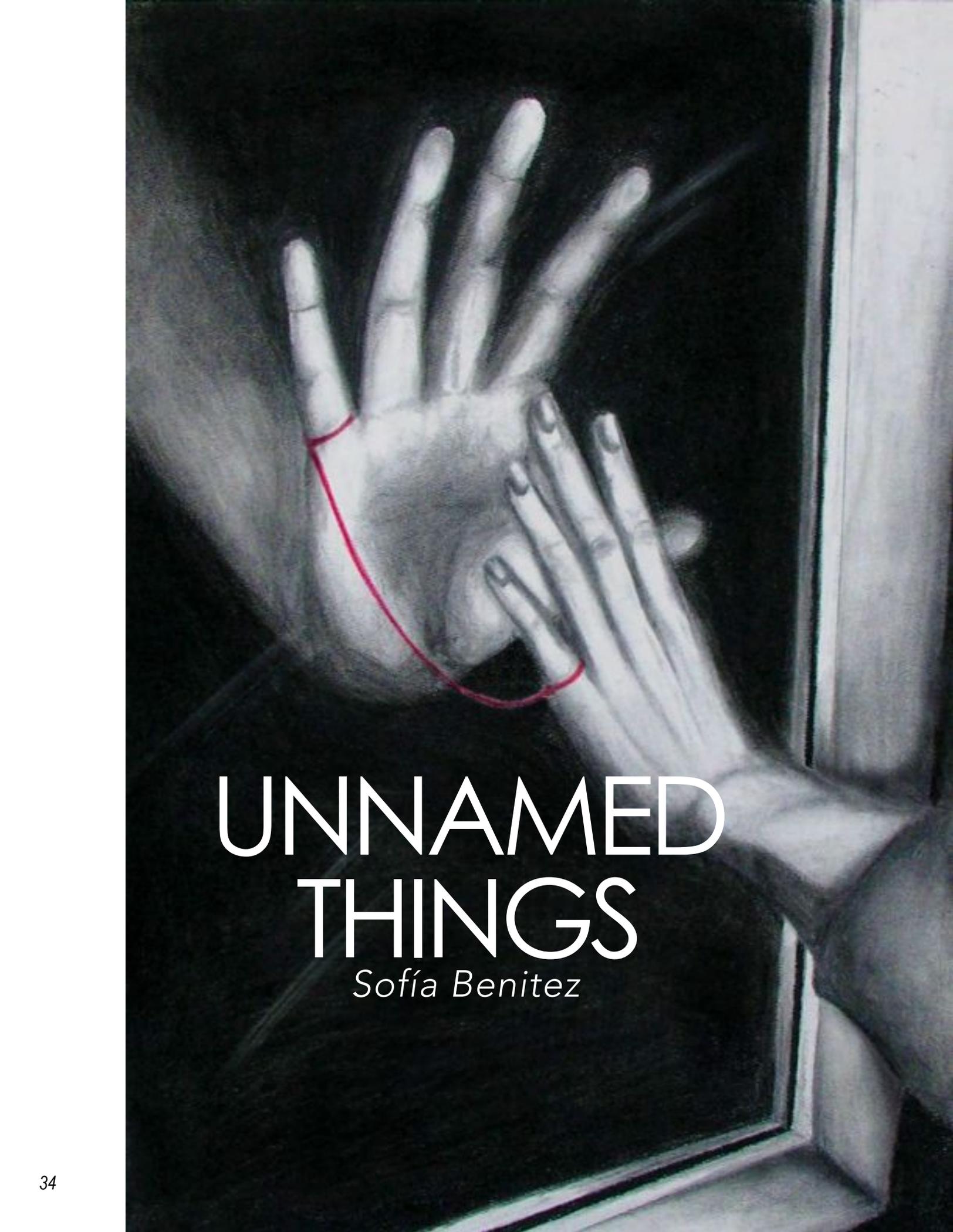
PAZ

Fernanda Corzo

Hay cierta tranquilidad en la muerte,
una tranquilidad que consume.
Hasta que deja de ser muerte
Y se convierte en un destino.

¿Para qué huir de ella?
¿Para qué interponerse ante lo inevitable?

Por eso he decidido:
La muerte no es un castigo,
La muerte no es una sentencia,
La muerte es paz.



UNNAMED
THINGS

Sofía Benitez

I think it prudent
for there to be names for things
but I must admit
they fall short at times

when did we decide
there was a limit to feelings
like the color spectrum
with nameless, unknown hues
that hide from our sight
and never see the light
yet we accept them.

Now tell me if you can
what do you call it when you are longing for the past?
Nostalgia, melancholia.
Feel it tearing through your heart?

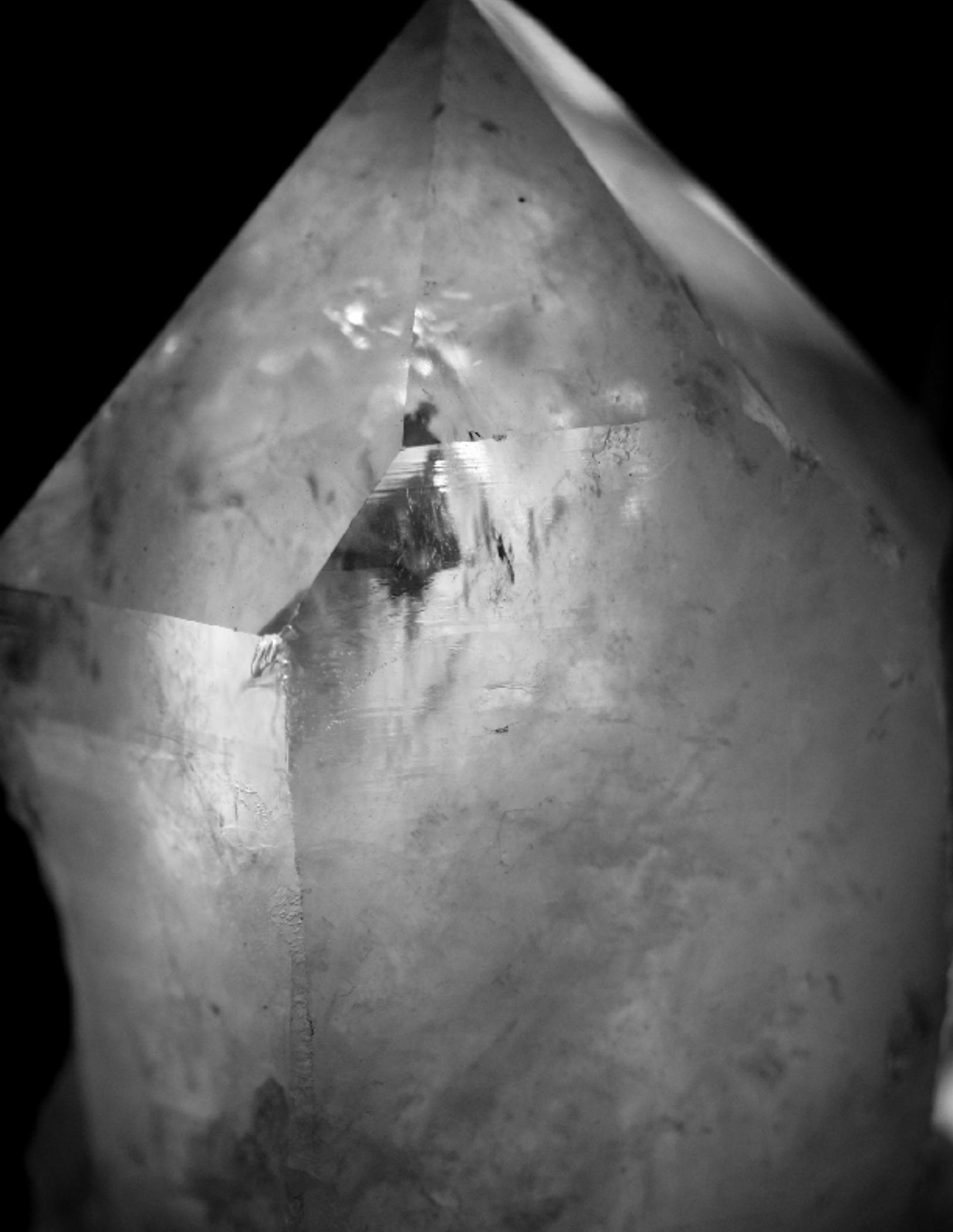
Now tell me what would you call it
when you have left and I am still keeping every moment
idle in a jar
like a transfixed embryo, frozen in the fluids of a sodden past?

And remind me now, what word there is
for the void in my bed
and your coffee cup still in the pantry
accumulating dust

I suppose it's not the first time someone felt like this,
I suppose there have been a number who have loved,
lost, and everything in between.

But if all has been said, and all has been done,
and all of it is recorded in the volumes of libraries
and private collections

how come nobody has made a name
for a portable grave, like the one I carry with me every day
mourning my loss though you are (I assume)
still alive, and well.



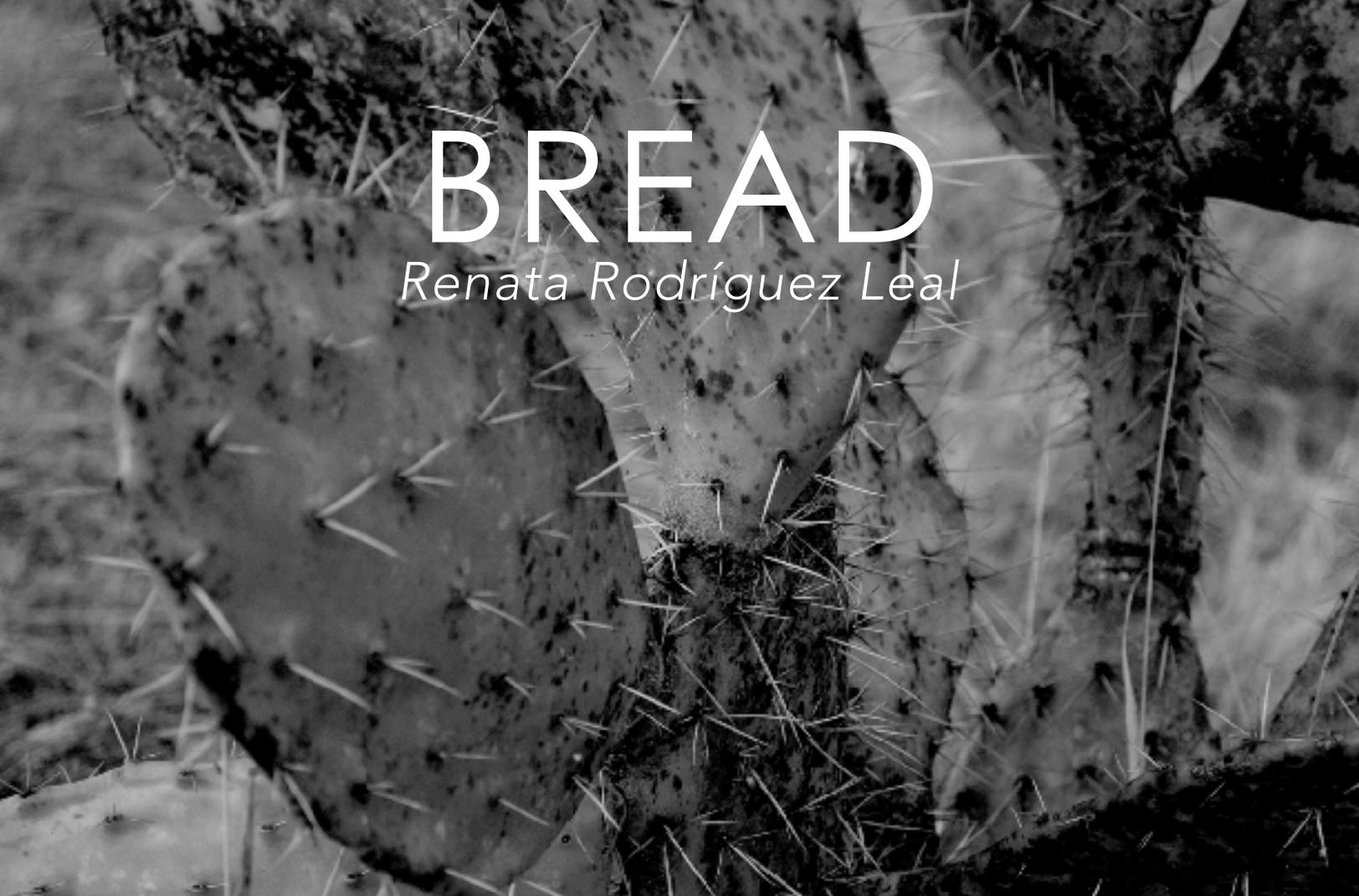
THE PUREST LOVE OF ALL

Alan Arias

It is a lie that brothers, hail from the same mother.
A myth that one must be gay, to love a man today.

For I see myself marrying you,
standing proudly at the gates of the Holy Church of Bromance
as you walk down the aisle to the *Imperial March*
–the Joey to my Chandler,
the Woody to my Buzz,
the Troy to my Abed in the morning–
down the aisle through the culturally-imposed-cloud-of-homosexual-misconception which *we dare not*
quaver before,
–let *them* quaver,
let *them* mock and doubt our sexuality,
let *them* confuse our love for the conceit that is romance,

For it is our love my brother,
which is the purest of them all,
in that it's void of carnal pleasure,
empty of aesthetic attraction,
of the vanities which intoxicate the truest of affections,
this very love–that we stand up and christen proudly as:
“Guy Love!
Just Love Between Two Guys!”



BREAD

Renata Rodríguez Leal

“Oh! Last week’s raisin bread! And canned beans! What a wonderful menu we have this morning. Why, thank you, Darla.” He grinned widely as he took his tray from the cook’s gloved hands. “Looking good today, eh darling! The net on your hair looks exceptionally beautiful!” The plump and bright-eyed middle-aged woman, who already had some streaks of gray on her hairline, rolled her eyes and chuckled at his enthusiasm. She never got tired of it. “Have you seen the new guy?

I’ve been trying to spot him so I can have a man-to-man conversation with him--see if there’s something I can do for him. I’ve heard he’s really young. I bet he’ll fall for your looks, like we all have.”

“Oh stop it George, you are making me blush.” Darla shook her head and lowered her chin to her thick chest, “He is right over there, in the corner. I tried to talk him up but he wouldn’t budge. Old Joey scared him when he growled in his face for brushing against his shoulder. Of

course he hates this place. We all do.”

“Speak for yourself darling. Yum, raging fresh meat. Today is going to be a great day, I can feel it in the air.”

“You say that *every day*, George.”

“Hey! Move along prick! We all want food, shut the hell up or I’ll shred you to pieces!” someone howled from the back of the line. The other men in line hooted and cheered the aggressor on, darting their attention to the man clogging the line by leisurely chatting with the lunch lady. The men roared with fury and jostled each others’ shoulders to forcibly prod him as he lazily picked up his tray and slid his feet forward.

“Jeez, I’m going. See you later beautiful!” George strode around the scattered tables of the cafeteria. There were no windows in the concrete walls, and the halogen lights flickered, clinging onto life with their fluttering beams. The air smelt of stale bread and sweaty jumpsuits. His dark brown eyes scanned the room for familiar faces. A smug smile sat upon his bulgy lips. He drummed his fingers along every trashy chair or table he wandered by. He didn’t mind them much, nor the absence of decoration in the whole building. He had learned to appreciate the lack

of complexity of the panorama. The structures that once seemed dull and gray to him now brought a sense of comfort. He spotted the table he was heading to, and started to make his way to it while several men glared at him with evident hostility towards his good mood.

The kid was hunched over the table, his blonde, scrawny hair plastered to his forehead. The conversations around them were muffled by the sound of plastic cutlery clashing hungrily over plates. As George got closer he noticed the kid in front of him had the pink trace of a scar on his right cheek. His shoulders were broad but he wasn’t sturdy enough to look threatening. Besides the scar, he looked like an ordinary young man who could be in his second year of college. He bit his lower lip with such force that it seemed it would burst open, gushing crimson blood at any second. There wasn’t a tray before him, and the vicious look in his eyes made even the toughest prisoners avoid his presence.

“Hey there young man, what’s up?” George took a place at the table right across from him, angling his tray between the sadistic-looking guy and himself, “Want some bread?”

“What do you want?” he asked coldly. His fists clenched tighter and his grim teeth bit down harder on his lip.

“Woah, chill man. I’m offering you some raisin bread, the best in town. And I also want to welcome you to our home here at Ironwood State! I’m glad to have a new young fellow to talk to.” George raised his hand and let it hover in the air before him. He did not take it. He just stared intensely across the room, as if he were plotting some way to escape the installation. The man dropped his rugged hand to the table, shrugged, and quickly busied himself with the task of wiping all the food off his tray. Other men around them snickered quietly, waiting for the kid to snap at George and kill his good humor for once and all.

“Ironwood State, for God’s sake!” He spit the words as if they were charged with venom, “So in here we refer to this lousy place as if it were an educational campus and not some shitty jail, right?” Voices hushed among the cafeteria while everyone tried to overhear their conversation.

George shrugged again, dismissing the attention that was now directed at them as if it weren’t there while he took a spoonful of

slimy beans. “Whatever floats your boat, boy.” He pointed his spoon at him while he chewed away, “What’s your name? Or do you want me to assign to you some badass nickname to ‘erase the traces of your tragic past’ like all pretentious youngsters like to do?”

“Okay, dude, please shut up. You are getting on my nerves.” There were bloody blotches on his lips already.

“Looks like someone isn’t going to be making friends anytime soon!”

“If I tell you my name will you leave me alone?” his fists were trembling.

“No. But it’d probably make me stop trying to mess with you, boy.” George laughed softly at him with amusement, using up three napkins at once to wipe away the food stuck on his wiry beard.

“Aaron. I’m Aaron. Now would you stop talking to me?” Sweat moistened the back of his neck.

“Hell no, that ain’t happening! I’m George, nice to meet you. Hey, want some bread?”

“No, I already said I don’t! Back off!” He slammed his right palm on the table unable to contain his temper anymore, making it and George’s tray tremble.

“Jeez. Well that only means more bread for me,” he grinned at Aaron. He drummed his fingers on his knees, creating a melody only audible to himself. “Hey, so when are you scheduled to be released?”

“In ten God damn years,” he slurred while he balled up his hands into fists again, staring off into space again with his murky gray eyes.

“Holy crap! I don’t even want to know what you did to deserve that.” Aaron glanced at George and narrowed his stern eyes at him, “I mean, being your age and all that.”

“I screwed up big time.” His jaw locked up in place.

“Ha! That is ridiculously obvious, thanks for pointing it out.”

Confusion washed down Aaron’s face as he tilted his face upward and the muscles on his shoulders loosened, “So you really don’t want to know?”

“Nah, I honestly don’t care. I’ve talked to pretty much everyone in here; there isn’t much that can surprise me anymore.” George’s fingers drummed faster and faster with his unknown tune.

“How long have you been in here?”

“Oh I don’t know, ten, fifteen years? I stopped counting days past the first couple of years. Time is only

an illusion and I’d rather live my life up without ever knowing how much of it has passed.” Aaron’s thin, blonde eyebrows shot upward, urging him for an explanation. He looked almost relaxed now with his hands crossed around his narrow chest.

“What did you do?”

“Me? Right now? I just ate too much bread and beans for my own good, but whatever. A man’s gotta do what he’s gotta do.”

“No, dude. You know what I meant. What did you do to get in here?”

George stopped his strumming and leaned onto his forearms with a small smile, inching closer to the young man sitting in front of him, “Does it matter, Aaron?”

“Well don’t you want to get out? To get away from this hell of a place? Everything sucks in here! You get crappy food that looks like the ooze they give dogs in pounds. You wear stinky ass orange jumpsuits that aren’t even your size. You have no contact with the outside world whatsoever. And you waste your time making license plates! You can’t live! This is not living! What the hell is wrong with you man?!”

Suddenly, the bearded man sat upright and got on his feet. He

started to distance himself from the table, defeated. His expression turned stern; the glint in his eyes disappeared and his mouth twisted into an unpleasant frown. And then, he was a complete stranger. “You do what you can with what you get, boy. And I ain’t leaving any time soon. Or ever.” And then George walked away, the friendly tone in his voice seemingly extinct.

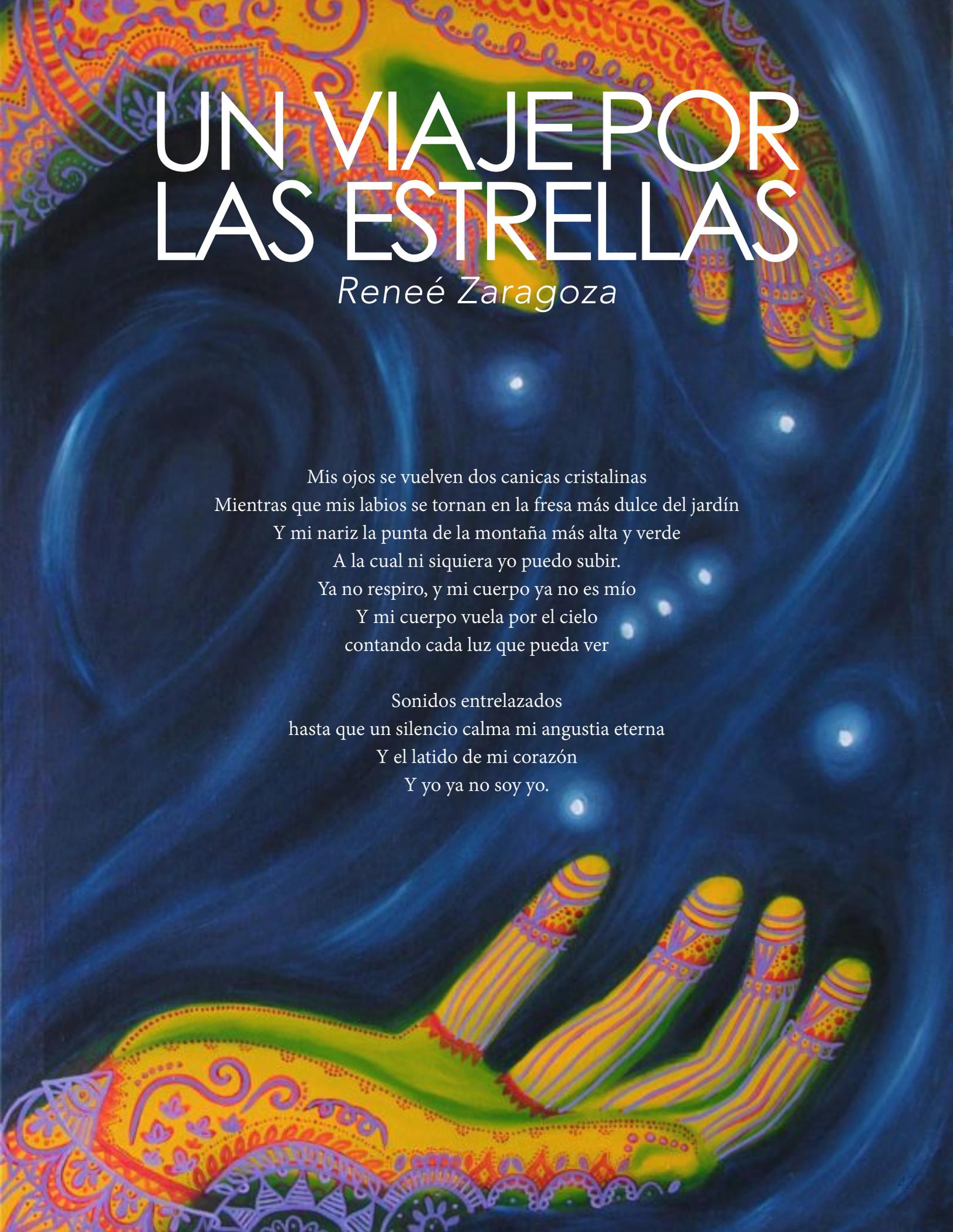
Aaron waited. Waited for him to turn around, to come back to help him out from the hell of a pit he

felt stuck in. But George didn’t turn around. He waited some more. And then he felt guilt well up inside him for the first time in his life, pressuring him to do something other than just wait for everything to get better on its own. Like he always did.

“George!”

The man stopped.

“I changed my mind...” Aaron paused. He licked his lips, a hopeful look emerging below the rage in his eyes. “Can I have some of that bread?”



UN VIAJE POR LAS ESTRELLAS

Reneé Zaragoza

Mis ojos se vuelven dos canicas cristalinas
Mientras que mis labios se tornan en la fresa más dulce del jardín
Y mi nariz la punta de la montaña más alta y verde
A la cual ni siquiera yo puedo subir.
Ya no respiro, y mi cuerpo ya no es mío
Y mi cuerpo vuela por el cielo
contando cada luz que pueda ver

Sonidos entrelazados
hasta que un silencio calma mi angustia eterna
Y el latido de mi corazón
Y yo ya no soy yo.

THE DECEASED

Francisco Aguirre

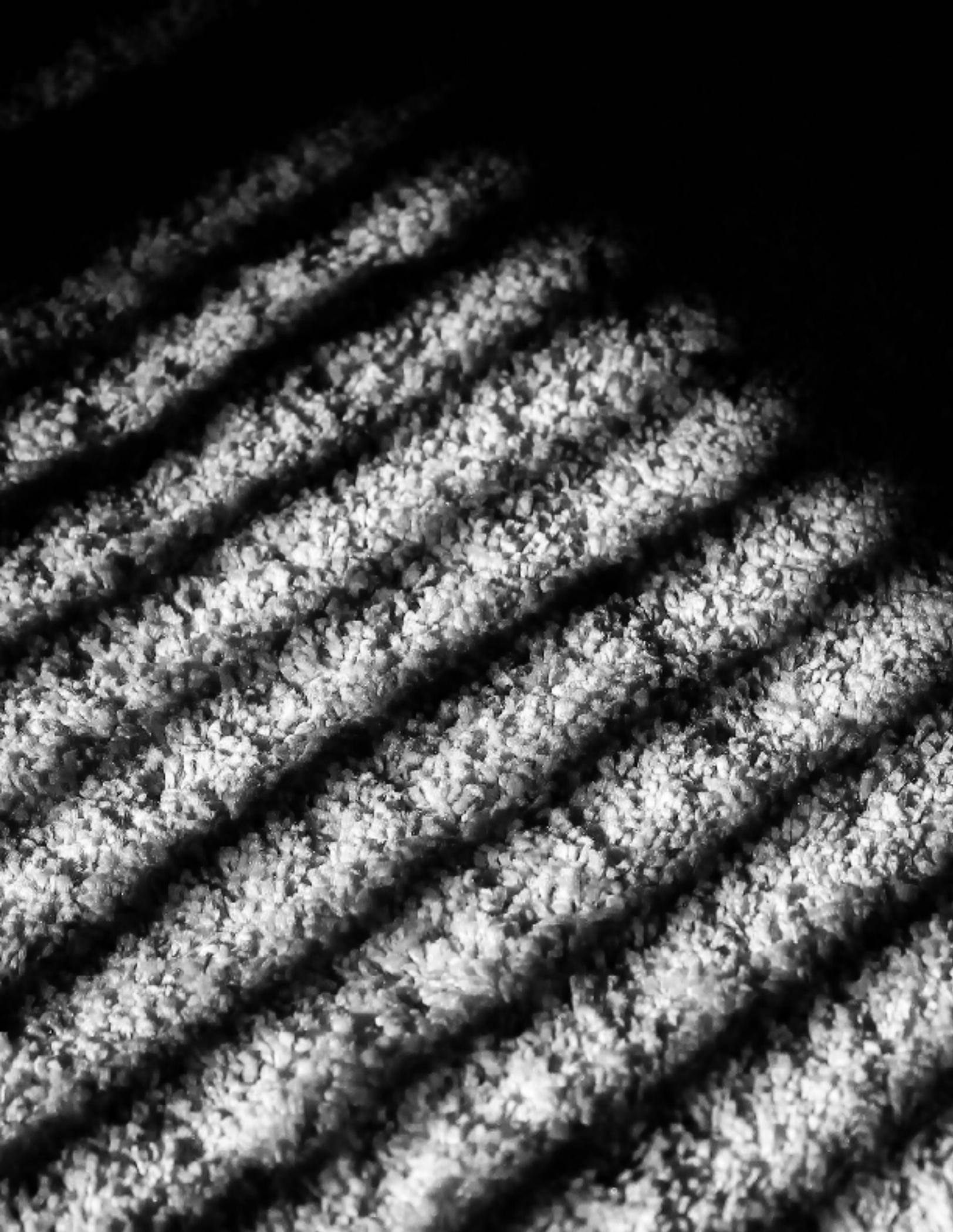
I hear their names
like a blow bursting in my ears.
They simulate a shocking throng,
their vowels scattered in my head,
roofed under consciousness.

I read their names
as if I was reading
between the lines of my own fate.
Embedded in my pupils,
sewn into my memory,
Like a rough sketch
beneath a masterpiece.

I see their faces in pictures,
torn and weathered pain
eternally inked
into my thoughts.

And these notions occupy my system,
within the atmosphere of this crude
empathy; “but why do we live
and they die, if in the end,
we are all equal under God’s eye?”

My answers falls into silence,
for respect of The Deceased.



A serene sunset scene over a calm body of water. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the upper center, casting a shimmering path of light across the water's surface. The sky is a soft, hazy orange. In the distance, a dark silhouette of a hill with a lighthouse is visible. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

FRAGMENTS

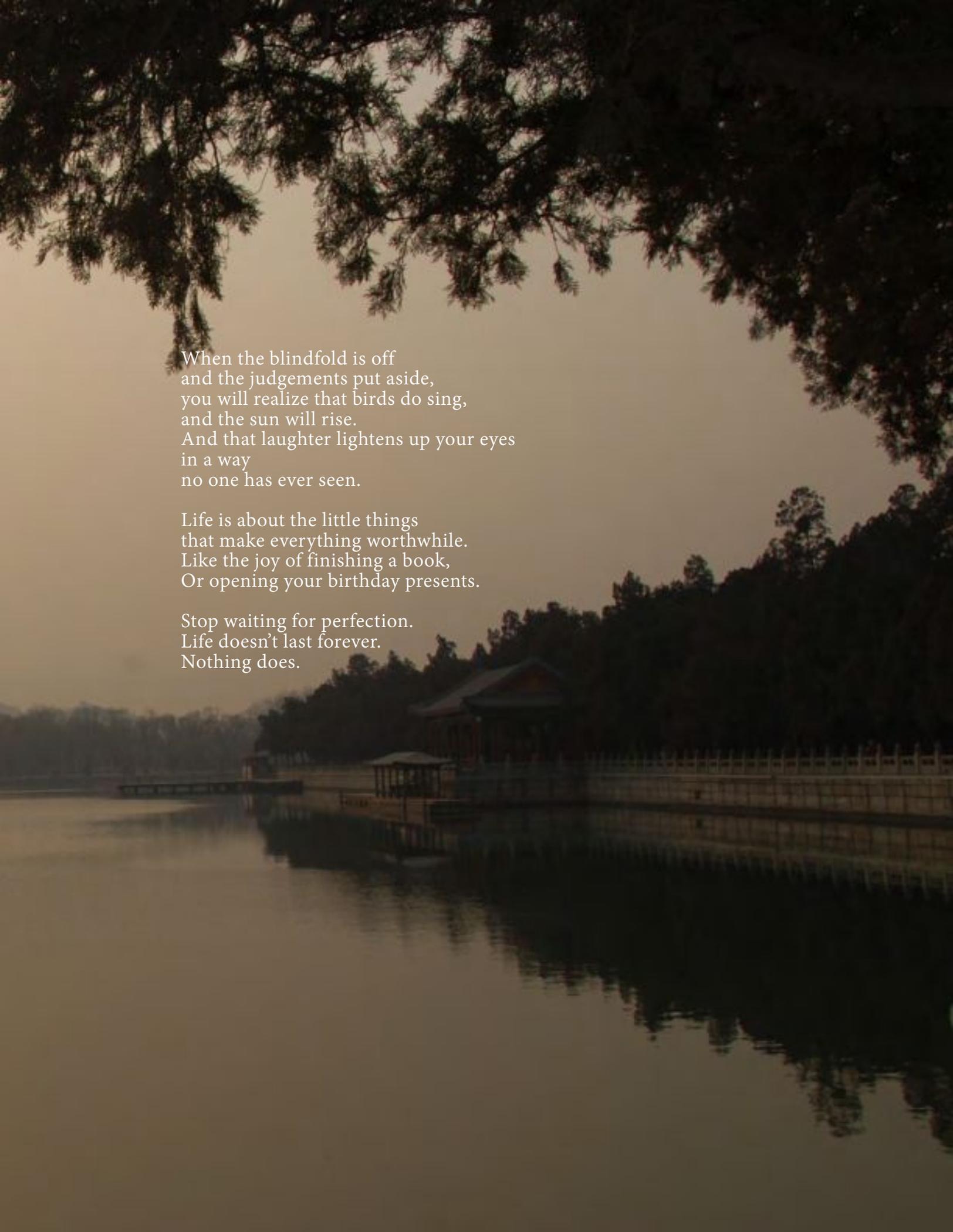
Sabrina Cuevas

Life doesn't last forever,
Nothing does.
Time runs out,
Lights turn off,
Batteries die,
It all ends.

Greed and mediocrity,
It's the melody of life.
One day you will wake up
With empty wrinkles beside your lips,
Too old to change
What should have been.

The things you never paid attention to.
The sound of the waves,
sun against skin,
and the melody of the tunes from your grandma's cottage.

The scent of a flower,
And when your hands intertwined.



When the blindfold is off
and the judgements put aside,
you will realize that birds do sing,
and the sun will rise.
And that laughter lightens up your eyes
in a way
no one has ever seen.

Life is about the little things
that make everything worthwhile.
Like the joy of finishing a book,
Or opening your birthday presents.

Stop waiting for perfection.
Life doesn't last forever.
Nothing does.

I WOULD KNOW

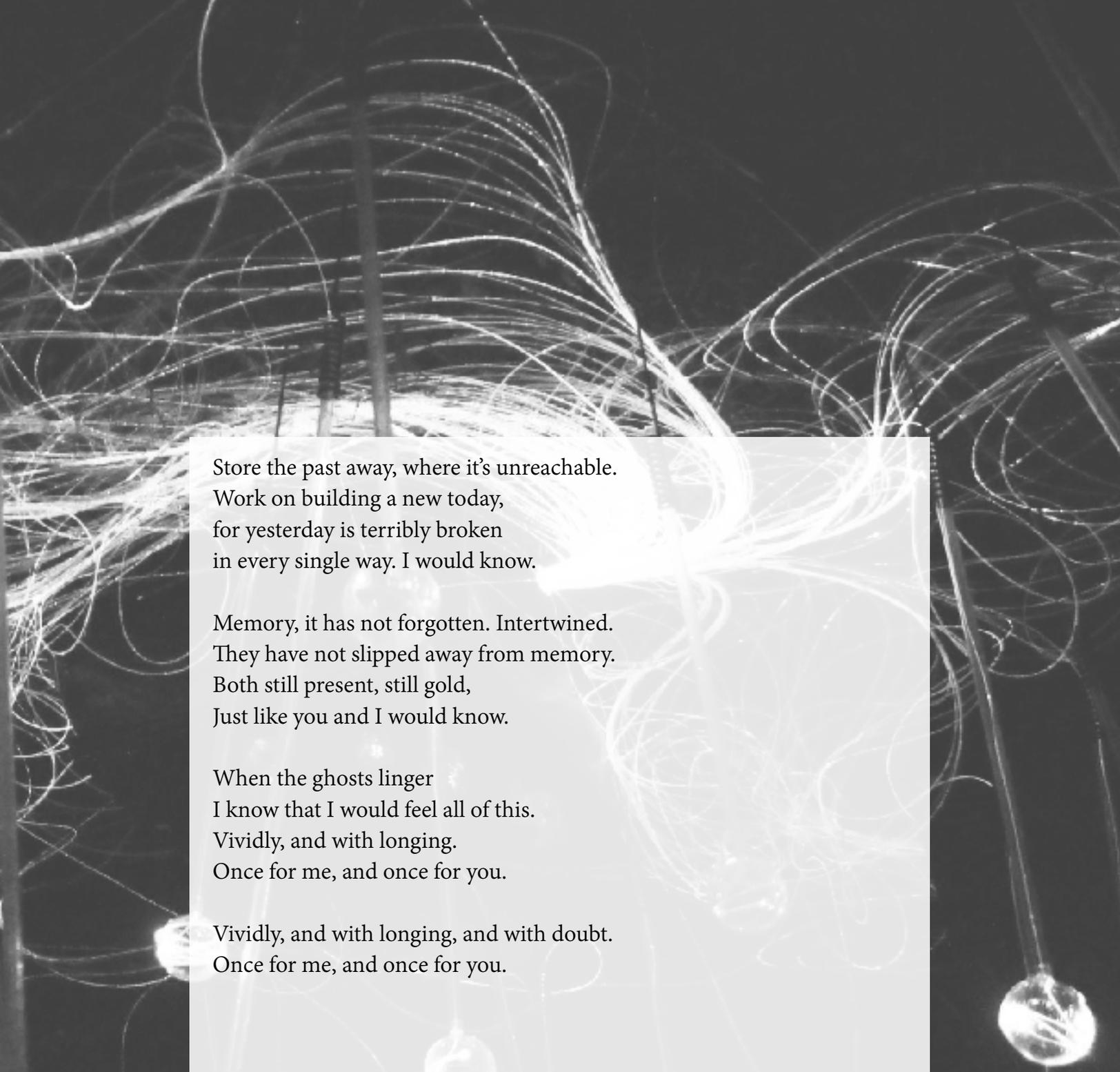
Leticia Sandoval

Ghosts of times past linger in the room
When you are about to go to sleep.
You let them punch you until you're feeble and limp.
I would know.

Dress to impress, but only when done right. You make them look twice.
People's criticism, glances, and whispers about the way you act
And never changed, never listened, not even for your own good.
I would know.

I can't help but worry. Impotence. My frustration builds up,
and humans can only handle so much.
Rage deceives you and makes you think I am to blame,
What a shame... I would know.

How did we get here?
Your many layers of misfortunes and lies.
Yet, it took only a few steps for me to walk away.
It's not as simple... I would know.



Store the past away, where it's unreachable.
Work on building a new today,
for yesterday is terribly broken
in every single way. I would know.

Memory, it has not forgotten. Intertwined.
They have not slipped away from memory.
Both still present, still gold,
Just like you and I would know.

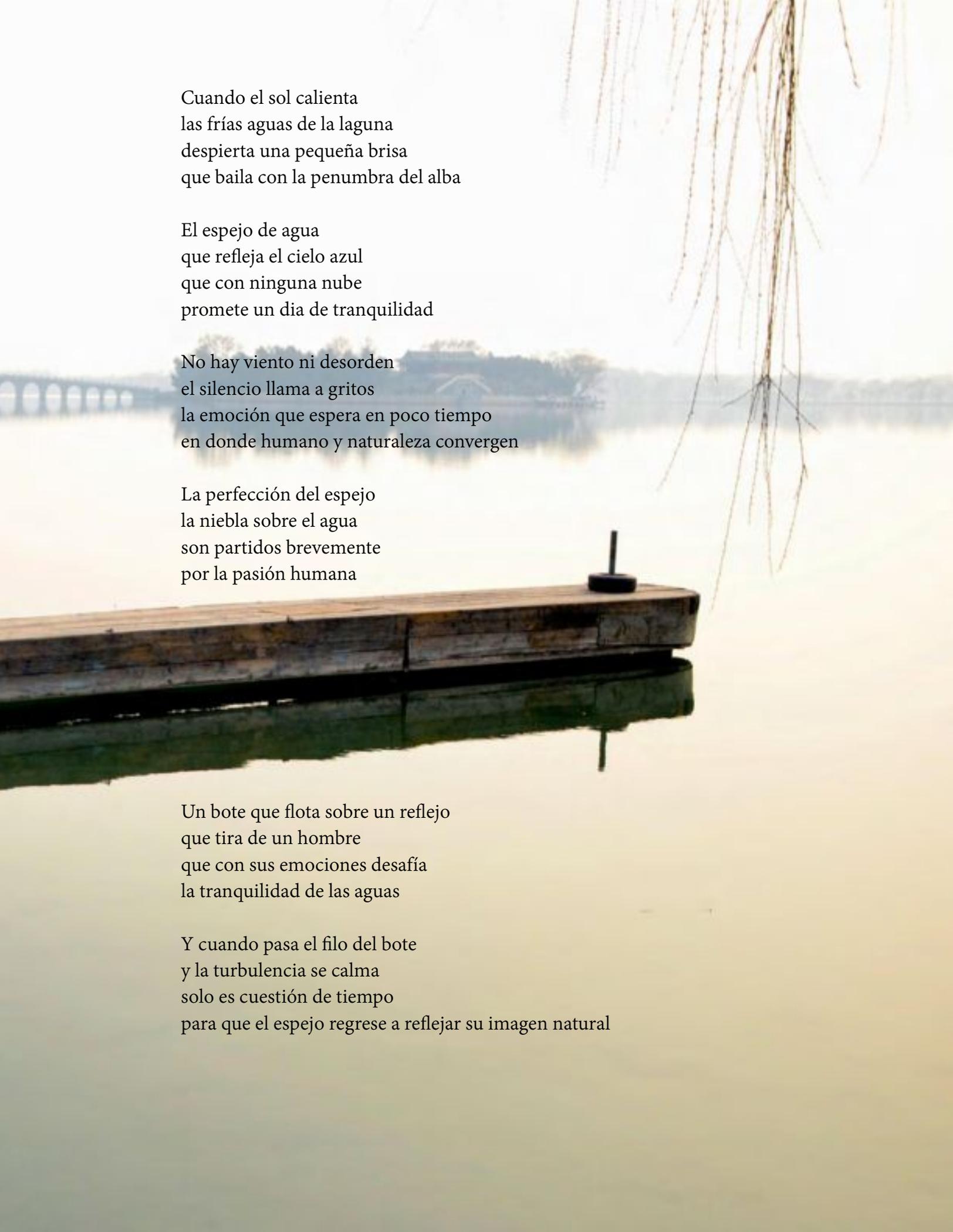
When the ghosts linger
I know that I would feel all of this.
Vividly, and with longing.
Once for me, and once for you.

Vividly, and with longing, and with doubt.
Once for me, and once for you.

POEMA PROPIO

Arturo Torres





Cuando el sol calienta
las frías aguas de la laguna
despierta una pequeña brisa
que baila con la penumbra del alba

El espejo de agua
que refleja el cielo azul
que con ninguna nube
promete un día de tranquilidad

No hay viento ni desorden
el silencio llama a gritos
la emoción que espera en poco tiempo
en donde humano y naturaleza convergen

La perfección del espejo
la niebla sobre el agua
son partidos brevemente
por la pasión humana

Un bote que flota sobre un reflejo
que tira de un hombre
que con sus emociones desafía
la tranquilidad de las aguas

Y cuando pasa el filo del bote
y la turbulencia se calma
solo es cuestión de tiempo
para que el espejo regrese a reflejar su imagen natural

LEER MEJORA LA VIDA

Mauricio Moel

“Todo aquel que lee, deja en un cajón de sus recuerdos una anécdota más para su existir.”

A lo largo de la historia, el conocimiento y la sabiduría se han pasado de generación en generación a través de los libros. Los libros conllevan cultura y aprendizaje, por eso son la principal fuente de información. También son una forma de disfrutar el tiempo. Lo más importante es que los libros te dejan tener paz contigo mismo, darte cuenta que tus problemas no son tan grandes como parecen, que no hay reto inalcanzable y que la capacidad humana es infinita; todo eso nos produce un estado de ánimo positivo que se refleja en nuestra vida diaria.

Cada libro, sin importar su género, está lleno de información y te deja una lección de vida. Es a través de los libros que podemos encontrarnos

con nuestro pasado y enfrentar el futuro seguros de estar haciendo lo correcto. Los libros son como la memoria de la humanidad, solo en ellos el hombre puede evitar tragedias, reconociendo un mismo pasado. La falta de lectura es justamente la principal causa de volver a cometer los mismos errores, ¿cuántas guerras se pueden evitar si el hombre lee lo que se ha sufrido en ellas? La posibilidad de ser y vivir mejor solo viene de conocer el pasado, y éste se encuentra en los libros.

Debemos reconocer que leer es divertido, da vuelo a la imaginación y nos permite reír, sufrir, llorar, sonreír, todo en unas cuantas páginas. Ningún juego o medio de entretenimiento tiene esa capacidad. Leer nos transporta a otros mundos que son el mejor refugio que podemos encontrar. Es por eso que debemos considerar la



lectura como una forma accesible y única para entretenernos.

Solo uno mismo puede conocer sus miedos, ilusiones y sueños. Leer nos permite explorar desde nuestro interior cómo otras personas lograron sueños similares, cómo enfrentaron los retos que nos preocupan. Leer nos regresa esa tranquilidad necesaria de entender que no hay nada nuevo bajo el sol. Leer nos lleva a platicar con

nosotros mismos, y es en esa reflexión donde obtenemos la fuerza necesaria para superar nuestros miedos e ilusiones. Saber que no estás solo en esta batalla interna brinda un estado de paz.

Por eso y muchas otras razones, se puede llegar a la simple conclusión de que leer mejora la vida.

BALAM

Jana Padilla

A Balam le gusta la música. Me di cuenta desde que la trajeron hace como dos meses. Me acuerdo bien que cuando llegó el sol estaba muy alto y se reflejaba en las hojas de los árboles del huerto, yo estaba atrás de la casa ayudándole a mi abuela Magda a colgar la ropa recién lavada en las cuerdas que puso mi papá entre las hamacas y en eso escuchamos el traqueteo de un carro que se acercaba por el camino de tierra. Entonces vi que era Gustavo, el hijo del patrón que venía con varios de los peones en un camión de redilas. Llamó a mi papá y le preguntó si ya tenía lista la jaula, después entre todos bajaron una caja de madera que parecía un huacal enorme donde venía encerrada Balam.

Se nota que mi abuela Magda quiere mucho a Balam, dice que sus ojos le recuerdan la mirada de mi mamá antes de que se nos muriera. Mi mamá tenía esos mismos ojos verdes. Ahora todas las tardes mi abuela camina mas allá del cenote, hasta el borde de la selva donde está la jaula de Balam y habla con ella durante horas, a veces le canta y otras le pone la cajita de música de

plata que era el tesoro de mi mamá. Balam mueve las orejas y muy despacio sale detrás del árbol donde está escondida y se pega a la reja y ronronea como gato, sólo mi abuela se atreve a meter la mano y rascarle la piel manchada.

Hace unos días vino otra vez Gustavo y le dijo a mi papá que el día de la luna llena van a soltar a Balam para que el patrón y sus amigos se diviertan saliendo de cacería. La abuela nada más apretó las manos hasta que los puños se le pusieron blancos, pero no dijo nada.

Hoy Balam ya no está en su jaula. La noche se va volviendo plateada y la selva poco a poco se llena de canto de grillos, ranas y lechuzas. Yo espero sentado cerca de la fogata y a lo lejos veo a los cazadores cargando sus escopetas, mientras los peones van por delante agitando las plantas y golpeando los árboles para sacar a Balam. Pero ella no sale.

Desde temprano la abuela Magda se ha internado en la espesura cantando muy bajito y llevando con ella la cajita de música que tanto le gusta a Balam.





THE OTHER ONE

Stephanie Lukac

She was the kind of girl everybody liked, the kind of girl everybody wanted to hang out with, the kind of girl everyone envied. She was the most talented among her classmates, beyond gorgeous compared to the rest of the girls in her grade, and smarter than most of the people in her high school. She was always the star of the show, the leader of the pack, the invariably lucky one. And unfortunately this girl was my twin sister Jane, and I couldn't stand it. Ever since I was born, Jane had received all the attention. Since I had been the first born, I was seen as the healthy baby who came out with no complications. Thus, I was immediately taken away from my mother's arms and placed into a plastic cubicle. In the meantime, my parents focused on Jane who was stuck inside my mother. After four hours of crying, screaming and pushing, Jane finally came out, only to have her umbilical cord wrapped around her neck. Once my mom saw her baby's head, purple and nearly lifeless, she lost it and passed out. My dad on the other side, went ballistic and started screaming like a madman. Two doctors quickly attended to the situation, and finally were able to uncoil the cord. Afterwards, Jane was handed to my mother who cried with joy. I was probably left in a cold lifeless box, waiting for them to get me. Yet,

eventually I know that my parents remembered me and brought me into the room. Since that day and sixteen years later, Jane has always been the center of attention.

Now it's not that my parents didn't like me, or for that matter love me, it's just that Jane needed more assistance. At least that's what they told me. Whenever meeting new people, Jane would always be introduced as the lucky one who survived a cord around her neck. She would be praised by people and they would automatically feel sympathy for her. On the other hand, I was the other twin, just the plain healthy one. Whether we were at a birthday party, or at the movies, everyone always seemed to like Jane better. Yes, she was kind and thoughtful, always thinking about others, with her blond curls and bright blue eyes. Oh, people could stare into those eyes for hours. And let's not forget about her sense of fashion. For some peculiar reason, Jane would always pick out the most divine clothes a girl could wear. Every time someone complimented Jane on the dress she wore or the shoes she had, even the ribbon in her hair, I would boil with envy. It seemed that whenever I tried to wear those clothes, they would hang awkwardly on my body. Yet whenever I complained, and told my mother about these thoughts, she would always say "*Now darling,*

you and Jane are twins, so you have the same blond hair and blue eyes. Both of you are special in your own unique way. And let's not give her such a hard time, after all it is a miracle she is alive."

On and on, I would hear about how we were the same because after all we were twins. But to tell you the truth, I never felt the least bit similar to that girl in any way. To be exact, I didn't even feel part of the family.

So I thought a lot about what I was planning to do. Every night I would come home, debating on whether I should or shouldn't. I knew I would regret it, not to mention get caught doing it. But each time, hearing on and on about how the cutest guy just asked her out or how the school had chosen her to give the presentation at the assembly, only made me want to do it more. Each time I grew more bitter. There were many factors to consider, though. The main one was, well she was my sister after all, my twin sister to be precise. Not only was she family, but in reality she was super nice. I mean that is what everyone always said. She always tried to include me in everything, not to mention even on some of her dates. One time she even took a fall for me, and was grounded a whole month. She never bragged about how she was number one. And she just had this effect on people, this

"Jane effect" that made others like her, and of course be the center of attention. So for this reason I needed to do it. There needed to be a change. A change where it was someone's else turn to be a role model for people. Maybe without Jane in the picture for once, I would be the one to stand out. Yet, for this to happen I would have to do it. I would do it. I'd kill Jane.

I am not the bad guy here, I truly am a kind person. But, if I want to prosper and grow, well let's just say that Jane has to be out of the picture. Sooner or later, it has to be me that people notice without having my sister be the reason why. I have already planned a simple way of doing it. She will feel no pain, and no harm will be done. Every night before going to bed, Jane meditates for fifteen minutes on her fluffy pink carpet. She has her earphones on, and her eyes closed and gets deeply into the mood. So while she is meditating, I will quietly sneak in, and with a simple sharp knife I will stab her from behind straight into her heart. I have spent hours online researching the exact place where the heart is, so this way she will die instantly and not suffer. As for me, well that's simple. I will sneak out of the house and grab a taxi to my grandma's house. There I will quietly slip inside the guest room and crawl into bed. Come morning, I would tell

my parents that I had spent the night at grandma's and could not believe what had happened to Jane. The knife would be gone, as well as all the evidence. Eventually my parents would get over the fact that their "miracle child" had died and life would go on. They would finally accept the fact that she was never really meant to stay in this world. Her friends at school would moan for her death and really miss her. In other words, who would they look up to now? Eventually though, they would forget about Jane, and find someone else to follow around. The teachers would miss their straight A student, just like all the kids that she tutored. As for me, I would miss Jane, I truly would. I mean after all, I envied her so much. I guess I spent a little too much time trying to be like her, that I forgot about my interests and what I wanted to do. So I know that this incident will be for the best. After all, she came into this world hanging on only by a string. And it was time this string was broken.

That night, before Jane went into her daily meditation routine, I hugged her and gave her a huge kiss. I felt tears welling in my eyes, but I quickly pushed them back. She kept telling me that she loved me but she really needed to meditate and that I would see her in the morning. I only laughed at her nonsense and left her room. I went back to my room, and grabbed the knife I had secretly kept. I slowly cleaned the knife and made sure it was shining bright. With the lights off, I crept back to Jane's room five minutes later. Before turning the knob, I lightly kissed the frigid metal of the knife, and smiled at my glowing reflection. And then I slowly turned the knob and went in. I quietly walked into her room, and shut the door behind me. I made my way towards Jane's carpet, until I reached her back. As I pulled the knife backwards, Jane turned around..."Melissa?"

PERMISSION TO SPEAK

Michael Hogan



As a child I had a terrible stammer which worsened as adolescence came with its emotional stresses and changes. I could not pronounce a vowel without a machinegun stutter of repetition. "Aa-aa-aa-apple," I would say. "Or-or-or-orange," I would splutter. In anticipation of such problems, I had learned to glue articles or adjectives to such words so that a consonant would preface each noun. "Give me th'apple," I'd say or "N'orange, please." All this planning went out the window, however, in times of emotional excitement when through enthusiasm or anger the words flowed faster than my deliberation could arrange them.

This weakness, this flaw, had its compensations at times. In the effort to find adjectives, to rearrange sentences, I developed a facility with language and a skill at rearranging words. All my comments were second draft and thus when I did finally speak, my words often had a deliberation and weight to them which they retain today. My wife remarks that I seem to invest a simple comment about taking out the garbage with all the high seriousness of a declamation on the vagaries of the Supreme Court.

Yet at the age of fourteen stammering was a painful and embarrassing infirmity. A bright child, I was often faced with the dilemma in class of not answering a question

I knew for fear of making a spectacle of myself, or answering the question after taking pains in word order and placement of consonants only to find to my chagrin that there was a follow-up question I had not anticipated. Here's a typical example of the second scenario:

"Can anyone tell us who the most important Catholic philosopher was? Yes, Michael?"

"That would be the philosopher, Thomas" (watch the A coming up), ah Thomas S'Aquinas. He was the" (change author for) "writer who gave us the *Summa Theologica*."

"Very good, Michael. And what was the name of the Greek philosopher who influenced him?"

"Ah, ah, eh, eh, eh, ay, aghr, Aristotle!"

I sat down to a chorus of laughs which obliterated my previous answer and relegated me to the position of class fool. Or worse: an object of pity to Mary Newbury with whom I was desperately in love. I had not told her my feelings, of course, and my chances of declaring them and being taken seriously had vanished forever after this latest exhibition.

One day, shortly after this episode, my ninth grade English teacher, Brother Felix, asked me to come see him after my last class. Our school was run by French Christian

Brothers who had their rectory on school grounds. As a result, staying after school was not a hardship for the teachers. Essentially, they lived at school. Nevertheless, looking back now, except for the coaches and the most exigent of the disciplinarians, few hung around the school after the last bell.

Brother Felix was erasing the blackboard when I went in. He told me to have a seat and then he began telling me about his own school years. He told me that when he was a teenager he used to stutter but that he seldom did anymore. "How did you get over it?" I asked. He told me that essentially he used two tools which were readily available: singing and projecting the voice.

"Do you like to sing?" he asked. I nodded. "And I'll bet you don't stutter when you sing, am I right?" I nodded again.

That week at his suggestion, I joined the school choir and began what would be a lifelong amateur passion for music. Even today I sing at Irish gatherings on St. Patrick's Day, I sing Christmas carols each holiday season, I sing in church, and I sing with and to my own English classes at the school where I teach. At Brother Felix's suggestion, I practiced for Glee Club recitals, I sang solos in the school's talent show, I sang high masses in the

local Catholic Church, and I enriched my life in ways I could not have imagined then through my studies of choral singing, Latin and French, and the history of music.

The skills involved in projecting the voice were harder to learn. I began by shouting memorized speeches and poems to the back of the class where Brother Felix sat correcting papers, apparently indifferent to my efforts and focused on his grade book. At the end of the hour, though, he smiled, and noted how many lines I had recited without a stammer. By my sophomore year under his tutelage, I had learned gestures, dramatic pauses, voice modulation, and breathing control. I had memorized dozens of poems, speeches and scenes from plays. I had even begun to write my own scripts and short speeches. By my junior year I had won oratory contests across the state, had been on a nationally televised debate tournaments, and had given extemporaneous talks in competitions, Toastmasters, student legislatures and at the Model U.N. in New York.

I discovered that, for me, speaking to large audiences was no more stressful than answering a question in class had been, or asking Mary Newbury for a date. The former I did with greater frequency. The latter, on the occasion of our junior prom,

and Mary accepted with the comment: “Why did you take so long. I liked you when we were in the 9th grade.”

I discovered through this experience that focusing on a weakness with determination and diligence could turn that flaw into a strength. Speaking to my graduation class, I received applause, not laughter or embarrassed silence. Much of it was due to the intervention of a caring and dedicated teacher. Brother Felix, long since passed away, is part of who I am today. I will never forget that and I try to emulate his example through my mission as a teacher. He gave me far more than a tool for dealing with a handicap. He gave me the key to the secret of living fully.

I am still a stammerer, of course. I have simply discovered a method wherein I manage to avoid stuttering most of the time, but always the tendency is there. Michael, the 9th grade student, is forever a part of who I am. When I am sufficiently moved by

the language, or by an emotion, a click ascends in the larynx that sometimes is converted into a lilt, a thoughtful pause, a Kennedyesque repetition, or a doubling of the consonant. Other times, it results in a dramatic turn in thought or image as I move to replace one word with another less trouble to the tongue.

For most of those who hear me speak, these devices are unremarked, or noticed simply as a wide range of emotional devices used by a speaker comfortable with language and ideas. Yet for Michael, the boy in the front row with his hand up, dreading what will come out of his mouth, they are the tools which make him a teacher today. For Michael, the boy in the basement declaiming Patrick Henry’s “Give me liberty or give me death” speech, the boy in the choir transcendent with music, they are and always will be the stuff of miracles.



THE CAFÉ

Alma Vázquez

My street is named after the Aztec Queen Acamapichtli. Its blue name is nailed to the corner of a new café. That café is a silk patch on a worn mungo dress. It is the epitome of a parisian café. The windows are all dressed up in deep red velvet, the chairs with woven seats. Not like the chairs in the Bachata, the ones with coarse straw intertwined in the seats. From the outside windows the commotion is evident. Azabache women wear their berets and laced dresses. Beneath the chignons with satin flowers, colorful ribbons peek out like garlands after the week of Candelaria all knotted up and crushed. Women wear pale nylons, coffee with milk. There is no border between the stale stains and skin. Woven huaraches, like crabs, crawl under the tumble of frills, drapery and ribbons. Men absentmindedly adjusting their suspenders with ocote shavings tucked underneath. I can see her clearly, Xochitl Cruz,

that's her name. Elongating her piloncillo neck above her collar like a proper mademoiselle. Jade amulets tucked in bosoms and bandanas concealed under neckties. A pink parade of ruffles, the owner, Madame Pelletier, pretty as a quinceañera, pretty as a three story membrillo cake brimming with fuschia frosting, sashayed around the booths. Flinging back stray hairs from waiters' heads. Pinching the waitress' cheek, making it look like rouge.

The café closed after a few months. Something to do with Madame Pelletier. She couldn't stand the improperness of the place. The horses tied to posts in the streets, the pungent smell of the smudges of fruit pulp on the girls' cheeks, the smell of earth, roasted cocoa colored skin. Every so many steps she would halt and exclaim "Sacré Bleu!", tucking her own stray hairs back into her bouffant.

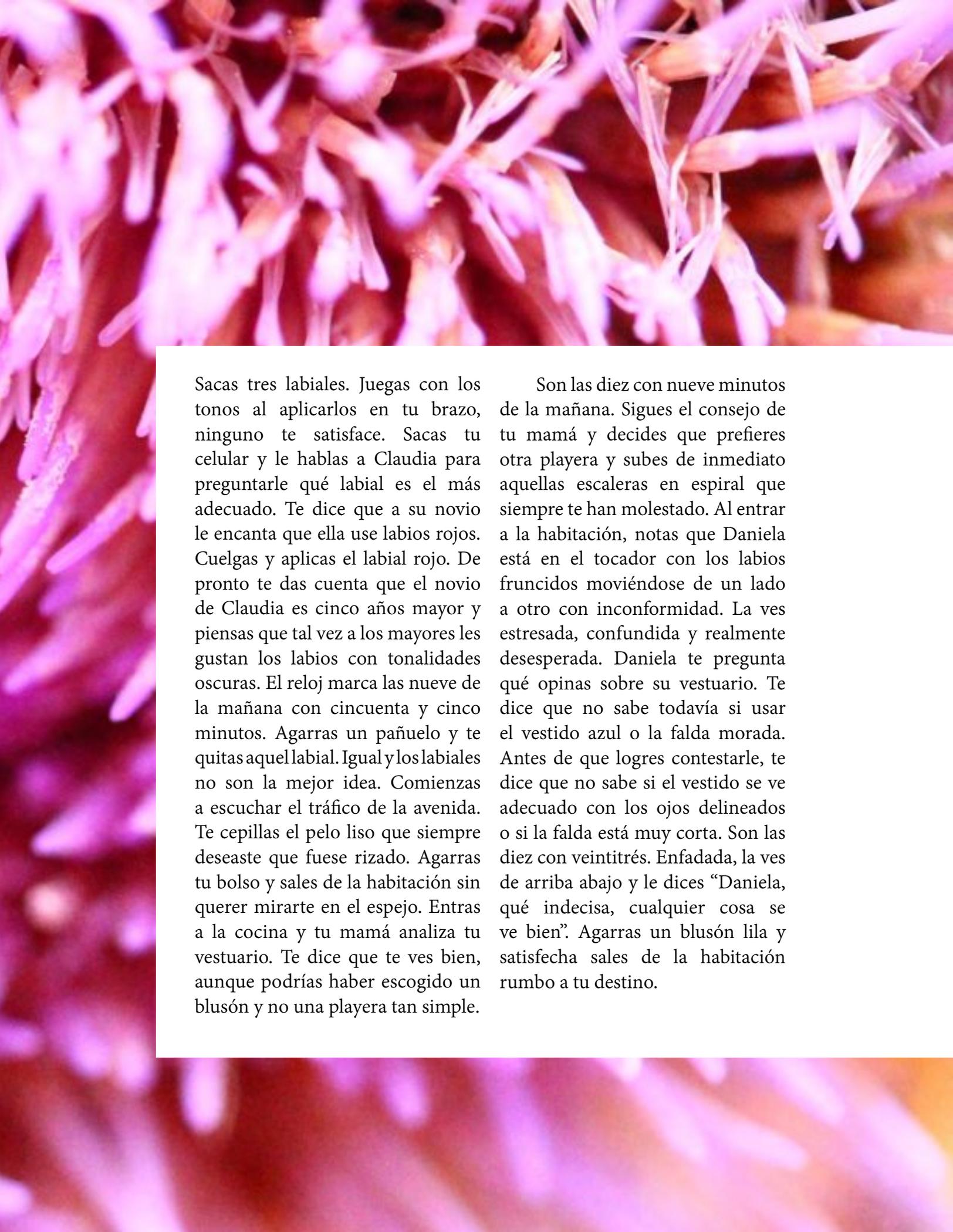
CADA MAÑANA

María José Flores

Cuando tenías trece tu mamá te decía que con cualquier atuendo te verías hermosa. Hoy, es un poco más honesta. Son las nueve de la mañana. Comienzas a escuchar pajaritos y el tremendo rayo de luz de aquella ventana impregna tu habitación. La insistente alarma del despertador invade a tu cabeza de tal manera que interrumpe tu sueño con Francisco. Tú, un ser indiferente ante más de cien alumnas en la facultad de medicina decides que hoy es el día en el que le dirás a Francisco que no solo lo ves como compañero de laboratorio. Al repetir ese nombre, Francisco, sonríes, e inmediatamente esa sonrisa se convierte en angustia. Primero debes pararte de la cama e ir a ver ese fabuloso atuendo al cual le espera una crítica. Sacas un blusón rosa mexicano. Aquel que usaste el primer día de clases. El rosa hace resaltar las caderas que no tienes. Asimismo, sacas una

playera de manga corta y cuello en v color verde. El verde que hace brillar tus ojos, que son más negros que verdes. Suspiras, apuesto que a Francisco le encantan los ojos verdes. Pero a mí me gustan mis dos caniquitas oscuras, piensas. Por Dios, te vuelves a decir, claramente se fija en los ojos. Finalmente, te decides por unos mallones negros y una playera negra con cuello redondo. Te repites a ti misma que tu madre siempre dice que el negro te hace ver más esbelta. No es que esté gorda, piensas, o quizá sí. Ves la hora, son las nueve de la mañana con treinta y cinco minutos. Te das cuenta que todavía debes maquillarte y desayunar. A tu mamá le gusta verte maquillada.

Sacas tu bolso de maquillaje y un labial color magenta te hace ojitos. No recuerdas si a Francisco le gusta que las niñas usen labiales de colores fuertes. Piensas que no quieres dar una impresión vulgar.

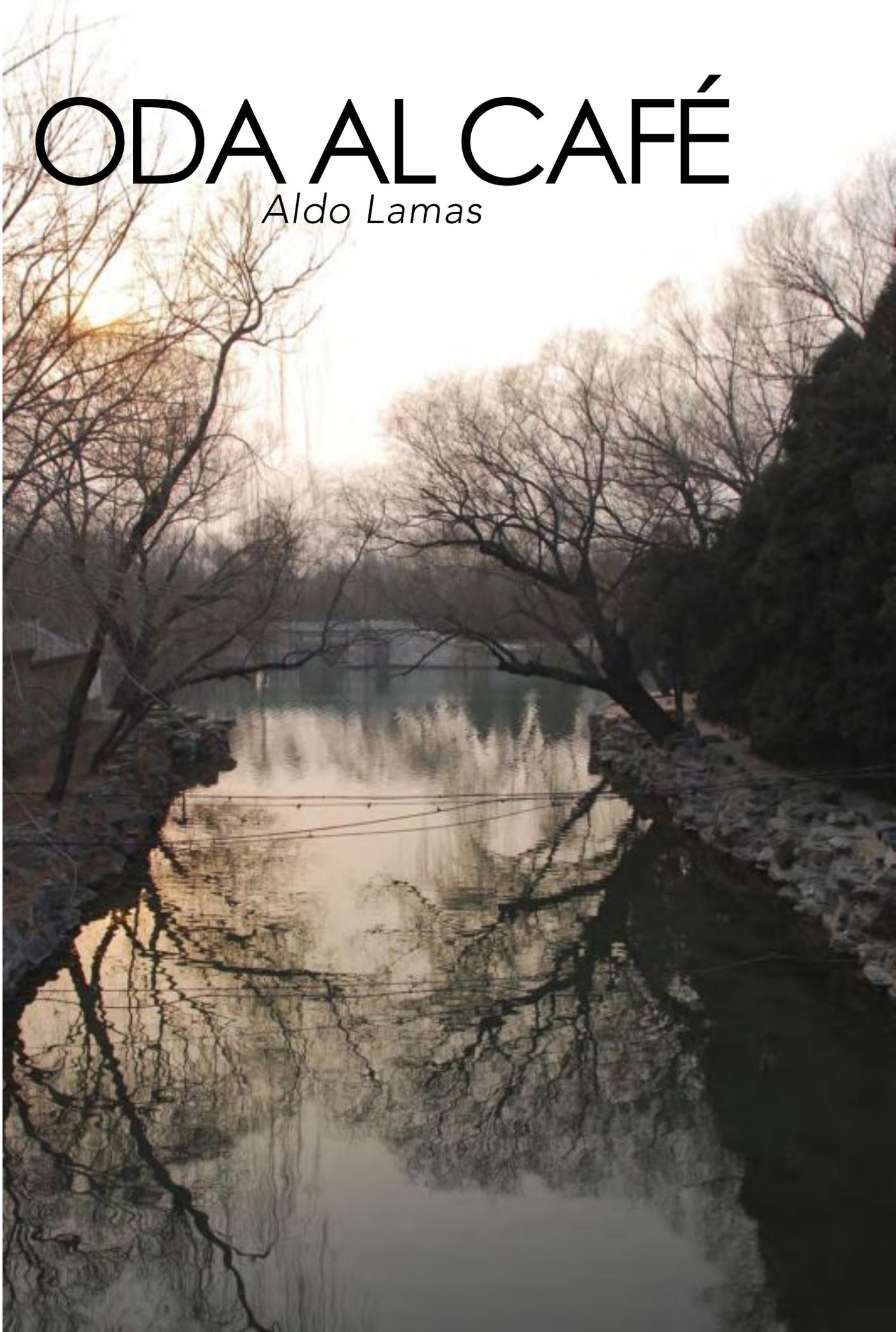
A close-up photograph of numerous small, delicate flowers in shades of pink and purple. The flowers are densely packed and appear to be in various stages of bloom, with some showing prominent stamens. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of these colors, creating a dreamy and textured effect.

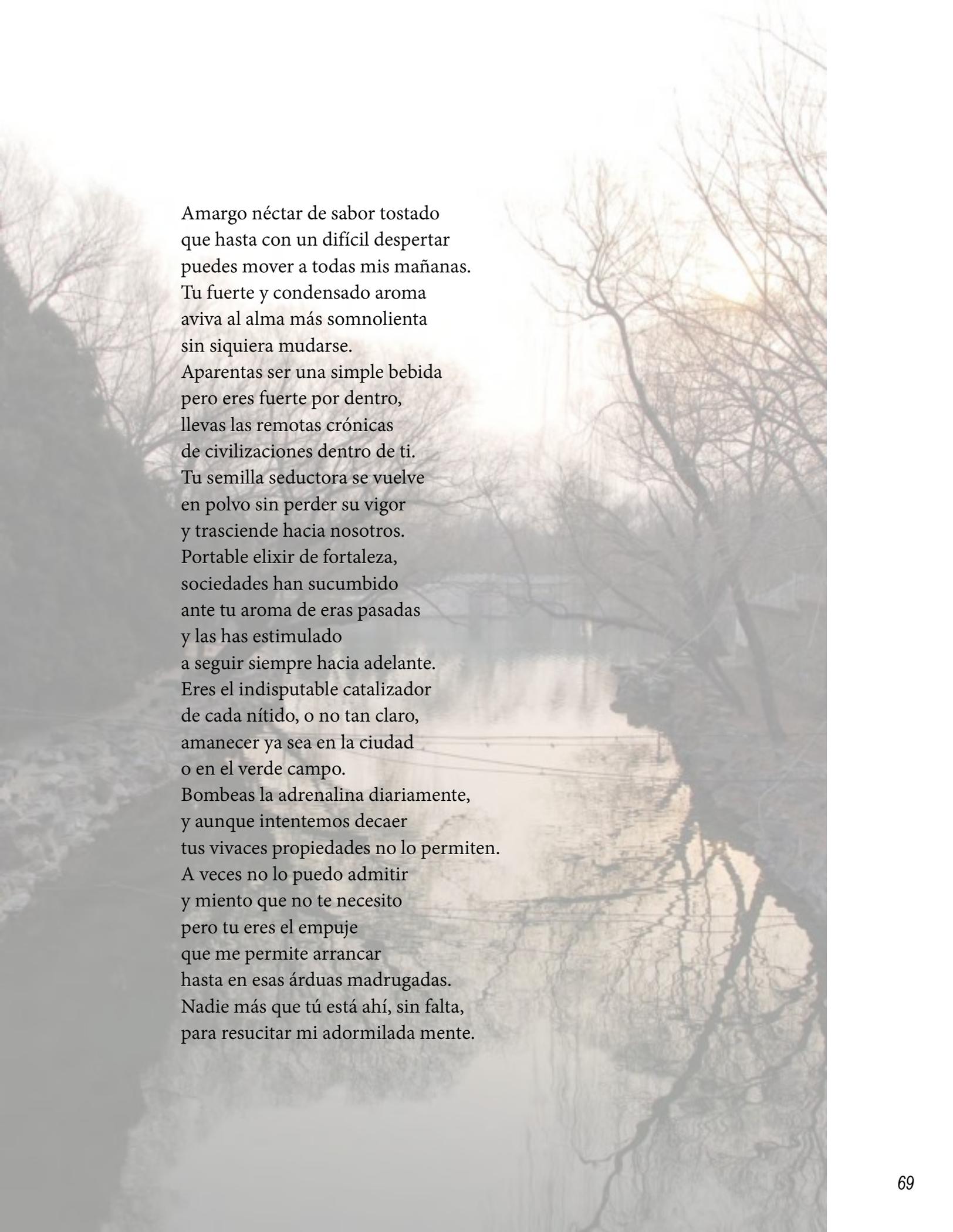
Sacas tres labiales. Juegas con los tonos al aplicarlos en tu brazo, ninguno te satisface. Sacas tu celular y le hablas a Claudia para preguntarle qué labial es el más adecuado. Te dice que a su novio le encanta que ella use labios rojos. Cuelgas y aplicas el labial rojo. De pronto te das cuenta que el novio de Claudia es cinco años mayor y piensas que tal vez a los mayores les gustan los labios con tonalidades oscuras. El reloj marca las nueve de la mañana con cincuenta y cinco minutos. Agarras un pañuelo y te quitas aquellabial. Igualyloslabiales no son la mejor idea. Comienzas a escuchar el tráfico de la avenida. Te cepillas el pelo liso que siempre deseaste que fuese rizado. Agarras tu bolso y sales de la habitación sin querer mirarte en el espejo. Entrás a la cocina y tu mamá analiza tu vestuario. Te dice que te ves bien, aunque podrías haber escogido un blusón y no una playera tan simple.

Son las diez con nueve minutos de la mañana. Sigues el consejo de tu mamá y decides que prefieres otra playera y subes de inmediato aquellas escaleras en espiral que siempre te han molestado. Al entrar a la habitación, notas que Daniela está en el tocador con los labios fruncidos moviéndose de un lado a otro con inconformidad. La ves estresada, confundida y realmente desesperada. Daniela te pregunta qué opinas sobre su vestuario. Te dice que no sabe todavía si usar el vestido azul o la falda morada. Antes de que logres contestarle, te dice que no sabe si el vestido se ve adecuado con los ojos delineados o si la falda está muy corta. Son las diez con veintitrés. Enfadada, la ves de arriba abajo y le dices “Daniela, qué indecisa, cualquier cosa se ve bien”. Agarras un blusón lila y satisfecha sales de la habitación rumbo a tu destino.

ODA AL CAFÉ

Aldo Lamas



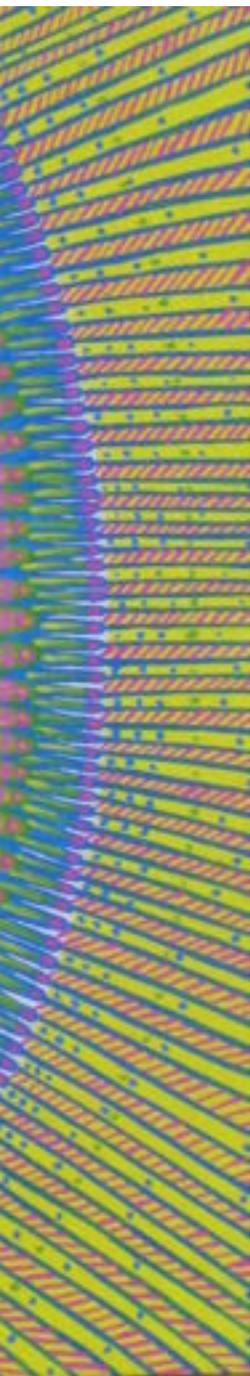


Amargo néctar de sabor tostado
que hasta con un difícil despertar
puedes mover a todas mis mañanas.
Tu fuerte y condensado aroma
aviva al alma más somnolienta
sin siquiera mudarse.
Aparentas ser una simple bebida
pero eres fuerte por dentro,
llevas las remotas crónicas
de civilizaciones dentro de ti.
Tu semilla seductora se vuelve
en polvo sin perder su vigor
y trasciende hacia nosotros.
Portable elixir de fortaleza,
sociedades han sucumbido
ante tu aroma de eras pasadas
y las has estimulado
a seguir siempre hacia adelante.
Eres el indisputable catalizador
de cada nítido, o no tan claro,
amanecer ya sea en la ciudad
o en el verde campo.
Bombeas la adrenalina diariamente,
y aunque intentemos decaer
tus vivaces propiedades no lo permiten.
A veces no lo puedo admitir
y miento que no te necesito
pero tu eres el empuje
que me permite arrancar
hasta en esas árduas madrugadas.
Nadie más que tú está ahí, sin falta,
para resucitar mi adormilada mente.



TLALI

Jana Padilla



Sin preguntarme siquiera me pusieron en los brazos a esa niña rubia de ojos oblicuos que tan solo tenía dos días de vida. Dicen que cuando ella nació, su madre apenas le dedicó una mirada de disgusto al comprobar que era distinta y aunque cumplió con su deber y trató de amamantarla, la niña sintió el rechazo y no quiso agarrar el pezón. Un par de días después nadie podía aguantar su llanto, entonces me dijeron que yo la cuidaría en vez de hacer la limpieza. Fue así como me convertí en su nana.

En cuanto la vi, me di cuenta de que tenía una estrella invisible en la frente y que no era del todo humana sino que el espíritu del bosque moraba en ella. El domingo siguiente aproveché que todos se habían ido a misa y la llevé a que la revisara el curandero del mercado.... *“Hmmm, no te preocupes por ella, es un alma muy antigua. Le llamaremos Tlali para que no olvide su origen... Le costará encontrar a los suyos y tú tendrás que protegerla mientras llegan.”*

La familia le dio un nombre francés, difícil de pronunciar, pero ella no les hacía caso. Tlali creció inquieta y solitaria, hablando con las hormigas y jugando con los perros entre las macetas del patio trasero. A veces regresaba de la escuela con la cara sucia de lágrimas *“Nana, ¿por qué nadie quiere jugar conmigo?”* y yo nunca supe cómo explicarle que

su destino era caminar sola, así que la abrazaba fuerte y para distraerla le contaba historias de mi pueblo allá en la sierra.

Hasta me mandaron con ella a la escuela para que le ayudara, así fue como yo también conocí los libros. Le limpié el llanto cuando nadie vino a sus fiestas de cumpleaños, cuando no la escogieron para el equipo de natación, cuando sus compañeras empezaron a tener novio y ella se fue quedando sola. La vi volverse hosca, gato de azotea y araña de cochera. Cuando ya no pudo seguir el paso de los otros chicos, nos quedamos en la casa y la enseñé a cocinar. Pero ella olvidaba los ingredientes, quemaba las tortillas y ni los perros querían probar sus guisos. Mi niña cada vez estaba más triste, su luz se iba apagando y como no quería dejarla sola, cuando llegó el invierno, me la llevé a la sierra conmigo sin avisarle a nadie.

Al llegar ahí lo miró todo con ojos asombrados: las casas de adobe, los árboles altísimos, la luna entre las nubes. Muy despacio se acercó a los niños, indios como yo, morenos y francos que le sonrieron sin cuestionar nada y sin fijarse en su edad la invitaron a jugar entre la milpa. En las mañanas Tlali bajaba al río y se bañaba con los peces, en las tardes corría por la falda de la montaña, le gritaba a los pájaros y se tostaba al sol. Aprendió a sembrar y

sus dedos se volvieron verdes, todo lo que ponía en la tierra crecía alto, las plantas que tocaba renacían y se llenaban de frutos. Con el tiempo, ella también se fue llenando de hojas y sus pies sacaron raíces.

Un día su familia quiso que regresara a mi niña. Mandaron hombres armados tras de nosotros. La buscaron por todo el pueblo, preguntaron a la gente, se metieron a las casas y hasta golpearon a

algunos. Se adentraron en el bosque y se acercaron a Tlali. Ella se quedó tranquila y los miró callada con su rostro de corteza. No la encontraron. Los hombres salieron del pueblo dejando un rastro de gente asustada, gallinas desplumadas y un puerco balaceado. Tlali los miró alejarse, sacudió despacio su cabello de líquen y extendió los brazos hacia el atardecer.

POR LO QUE PASAN LAS MUJERES

Claudia Padilla

Los personajes anacrónicos utilizados por Ángeles Mastretta en sus libros hacen que las protagonistas se vean más fuertes y mucho más feministas. Las épocas en las que se narran los libros son pre revolucionario, revolucionario y posrevolucionario. Por más que las épocas en las que los libros de Ángeles Mastretta están basados oprimen a las mujeres, las protagonistas tienen un carácter fuerte y sobresaliente comparado con todas las demás mujeres de sus libros.

Ángeles Mastretta nació en Puebla el 9 de octubre de 1949. Ella estudió Periodismo en la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales en la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. En 1985 publicó su primera novela: *Arráncame la vida*, con la cual ganó el Premio Mazatlán, tuvo muchas ventas y fue un gran fenómeno, pues se tradujo a quince idiomas. Después de ese libro, publicó algunos relatos como *Mujeres de ojos grandes* y novelas como *Ninguna eternidad como la mía* en 1999 y *Mal de amores*, que ganó el Premio Rómulo Gallegos, en 1997. La autora vivió el movimiento

feminista en México y se dio cuenta de todos los problemas que enfrentan diariamente las mujeres en nuestro país; por ello, quiso darles a las mujeres mucha fuerza en sus libros, así como también participó activamente en movimientos para otorgarles más poder a las mujeres, por ejemplo, ella formó una *Unión de mujeres antimachistas*.

El periodo en el que se basa la novela *Arráncame la vida* es en los años treinta y cuarenta en México. Este es un periodo posrevolucionario en el país, pues habían concluido todas las peleas de la revolución. La mujer novohispana se quedaba a complacer a su marido en su casa y se dedicaba a tener hijos. La siguiente novela, *Mal de amores*, toma lugar en el México pre revolucionario a finales del siglo XIX. México estaba en gran tensión pues ya no querían al gobierno que estaba y estaban en búsqueda de más oportunidades. Las mujeres tenían que ser amables, serviciales, débiles y siempre sacrificarse por los hombres. En las dos novelas, las mujeres principales son muy autónomas y no se dejan llevar por ningún hombre. Esto

no es muy común en las épocas en las que se narran las historias y por aquella razón éstas sobresalen más que cualquier otro personaje de las novelas.

En *Arráncame la vida*, las mujeres se casaban muy jóvenes y todo dependía de quién era el futuro marido y cuánto dinero tenía. La protagonista, Cati, es muy fuerte y reta mucho a su esposo. Cuando el lector la compara con las demás mujeres del libro se da cuenta de que Cati es una mujer muy independiente y no necesita a su esposo como todas las demás “Cuántas cosas ya no tendría que hacer. Estaba sola, nadie me mandaba. Cuántas cosas haría, pensé bajo la lluvia a carcajadas. Sentada en el suelo, jugando con la tierra húmeda, que rodeaba la tumba de Andrés. Divertida con mi futuro. Casi feliz” (Mastretta 270). Esta cita describe lo que Cati siente cuando su marido se muere, ella no se siente miserable pues nunca lo necesitó. Hay algunas mujeres que no son tan fuertes como Cati y que se dejan oprimir por sus esposos. “-- Tú no me hables así- le gritó Gómez- ¿Crees que soy un idiota? ¿Crees que soy el idiota de tu hijito? Me tratas como si yo fuera él.-...Le puso las manos en el cuello y empezó a apretárselo” (Mastretta 119-120). Después de esta escena, Bibi, la esposa de Gómez, actúa como si nada, ella ya estaba acostumbrada a ese tipo de maltratos y humillaciones. Mastretta juega con estos tipos de personajes para hacer más fuerte a su personaje principal.

En la novela de *Mal de amores*, las metas de las mujeres eran convertirse en amas de casas, madres y grandes esposas. Las mujeres de clase alta eran muy privilegiadas pues tenían muchos beneficios, mientras las de clase media y baja tenían una vida más dura. En la novela, la protagonista, Emilia Sauri, es muy liberal y se convierte en una mujer que no renuncia a lo que quiere ni a los sentimientos que tiene. Se enamora de dos hombres y trata de ver con cuál va a encontrar mayor estabilidad pues ella es muy independiente. Hay una parte del libro en la que ella se va con su marido a ayudar en la revolución como médica. No muchas mujeres participaban de esta forma pues se quedaban en casa con los hijos. También otra parte en la que Mastretta hace uso del anacronismo en la novela es cuando Emilia decide con qué hombre quedarse y no le importa qué piensen los demás. En esta época todo giraba en la sociedad y había una forma propia de comportarse y no muchos se atrevían a romperla.

Mastretta usa el anacronismo con la participación de las mujeres en la política para que los lectores puedan darse cuenta lo poco que participaban durante la revolución y después de la revolución. En *Mal de amores*, Josefa y Milagros, la mamá y la tía de Emilia luchan en la guerra de la revolución a comparación de las miles de mujeres que tenían prohibido salir a ayudar o que les daba miedo estar ahí.

Cuando la campana mayor de catedral sonó ronca para anunciar que había llegado la hora del combate, ella y su hermana Milagros estaban en el balcón, saludando con pañuelos a los grupos de tropa y pueblo armado que atravesaban las calles para cubrir las trincheras y las alturas de los templos. El mundo de entonces tenía el hábito de la guerra, y celebraba los grandes peligros como un vértigo de la costumbre. Como parte de ese mundo, Josefa sintió correr la sangre por sus muslos y en lugar de aterrarse giró en redondo gritando: “¡Estoy herida, pero no me pienso rendir!” (Mastretta 19).

En la época posrevolucionaria la mujer seguía sin participar en la política, pero a Cati le intrigaba demasiado, entonces quería informarse aunque la mayoría de las veces Andrés no la dejaba “Yo leía su periódico a escondidas. Cuando Andrés lo aventaba y salía mentando madres, yo lo recogía y lo devoraba.” (Mastretta 64). En los dos libros, la mayoría de las mujeres son menospreciadas por los hombres y por el entorno de la sociedad en

sí. Los hombres pensaban que ellas eran menos inteligentes y que sus opiniones eran innecesarias, mucho menos en la política. Al poner este tipo de personajes, Mastretta, les da una fuerza surreal y hacen mucho contraste con la realidad.

En ambos libros, la autora utiliza personajes anacrónicos que podrían estar en las décadas 70s, 80s o en la actualidad, pero no en las épocas de la revolución ni posrevolución. Con esto, la autora destaca la fuerza de las mujeres. En la novela de *Arráncame la vida* podemos observar a Cati como un personaje anacrónico y en *Mal de amores* a Emilia Sauri, a Josefa y a Milagros. Al hacer esto, Ángeles Mastretta le da una apariencia más fuerte a las mujeres. Al leer los libros, la audiencia se puede dar cuenta de lo que piensa Mastretta sobre las mujeres en el país de México y de lo mucho que apoya a las mujeres. Al utilizar personajes anacrónicos, ella hace que las mujeres sobresalgan en sus libros como héroes o modelos a seguir para sus lectoras.

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ODA AL TÉ

Zulette Guerrerosantos

Al momento que toca tus labios
sientes el calor acogedor.
Una especie de escudo
que te cubre, te cuida.

El invierno llega
y nada te cuida más
que un buen té.
Es la cobija del vagabundo.

Cuando tu corazón se encuentra
a mil grados bajo cero
tu solución es beberlo.
No hay nada mejor.

Para curar la melancolía
la frescura o la amargura,
la clave está
en esa cucharadita de felicidad.
Para endulzarnos la vida.

Pensándolo bien,
la miel también es un complemento,
un poco de limón,
o hielo.
Tú eliges la aventura.



Si agregas un poco de leche
Como nube se cubre todo,
el té se nubla
y a tranquilidad sabe.
Una paz en bebida,
una calma.

El té es más que una bebida
es la perdición,
el refugio.

NUESTRA SALVACIÓN

Itzel Rodríguez

En las noches frías, abraza mi mente con una manta de letras,
tiñe mis pestañas de un color dorado vivo,
hace a las historias cobrar vida ante mis ojos.

Entre papel y abecedarios Mary Poppins me ofrece una cucharada de azúcar
y Caperucita Roja camina con una canasta para su abuela.
En un abrir y cerrar de ojos Harry me eleva con hechizos y pociones
y veo la amistad que Shmuel y Bruno construyen
mientras Pedro Páramo procura confundirme.

Me acompaña a través de la juventud y la estupidez,
momentos de gloria pero sin olvidar los fracasos,
desconecta el cable entre mi mente y mi corazón por unas horas
y los une de acuerdo a la ficción en mis palmas.

Me arrulla, me cuida, me ayuda.
Me hace olvidar y recordar,
me hace sonreír y llorar,
me enamora, me rompe en pedacitos.

Y si en la vida todo se pudiera arreglar,
todo con pegamento y decisión,
si hubiera un mal y un bien, héroe contra villano,
un príncipe que salva a infelices princesas,
o un sapo al cual besar...
La literatura sería simplemente una biografía de la cotidianidad.





ENEMIGOS OCULTOS

Lourdes Govea

Aparentes gusanos de seda
tejen sigilosas telarañas alevosas
disfrazados de finos presagios
elaboran intrincados laberintos
siembran granadas ocultas
bajo un jardín aromático y sereno
proyectan paisajes apacibles
sobre sofocantes muros intangibles.

Esas redes intrincadas y expansivas
poderosas trampas invisibles
se estampan en la coraza tejida con hilos más fuertes todavía
que me sostienen y abrazan y protegen...

Me yergo sobre el lodo y limpio mis zapatos del fango enemigo

RECURRING DECAY

Sandra Lukac

It started out as a tiny flutter
felt deep within my chest.
As it grew, my mind shouted
stop before it eats you up.

The concern was ignored,
like it had been thousands of times before.
From flutter to intensity,
intensity to aching.

And the more I thought the more
the feeling grew.
Heavy within me.

I started to glow with sorrow,
the demons inside of me pounding
on my outer shell,
threatening with exposure.

It was impossible to stop now,
told you so, a voice within me whispered.
I had promised to never let it grow this immense again.
But, as always, I was just experiencing another recurring decay.





CRASH TEST DUMMIES

Suzanne Curtis

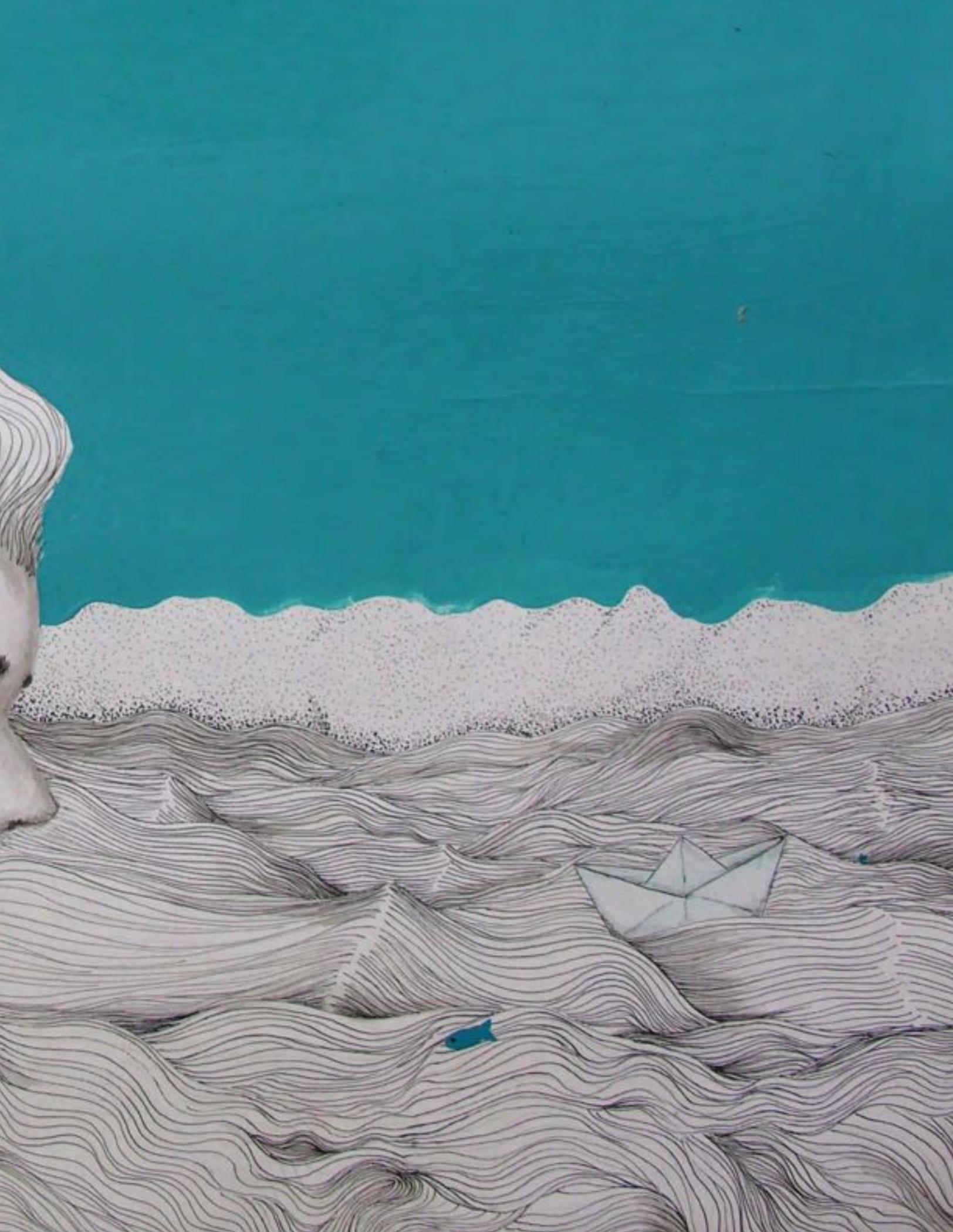


We're translucent crash test dummies
All swollen up and bouncy
when someone stuffs us in a car
& pushes the pedal to the floor,
we go speeding headlong, whamming up against love.
We missed those warning signs—
Yield, do not pass, steep grade ahead, slippery when wet—
We're pummeled up one side, bruised down the other
when those oncoming Jaguars roar through our hearts.

After the crushed glass, bent fenders and wrong turns
Our stitched lips long to open wide & holler
“Get me out of this wreckage!”
But we know, if we did abandon that worn roadway
all our air would swoosh out,
we'd be flat and useless.

Mashed and mangled, we're picked up,
put back together and road tested again—
Dodging falling rock, negotiating narrow roads,
swerving S curves.
Till we get to that blood red sign.
We see it, this time, big and bold—
Stop. Look both ways.
Proceed with caution.
We're road weary but no longer dummies.









**La creación intelectual es el más misterioso
y solitario de los oficios humanos.**

-Gabriel García Márquez