

ISSUE ONE

GRANADA



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ODE TO ALL THE ROADKILL

by Evan Martinez

after Ada Limón

I wonder what your families must think
when you don't come home. Do they lose
their minds like mine would? I hope
they find peace in your smell slithering
around the home, wayward spirits cast
back from the Other world to catch
holy tears before they reach damned
ground. Downtrodden, diseased,
dismembered, like you, by smoking
rubber, by appointments that can't
be missed, by pilots of spacecrafts
tempted by cosmic stutter-stops,
forgo, forget all you've known
and imagine how it feels to be
crushed by something so big
and uncaring that it names
you all with its own actions.
What did you do? Where?
I killed. On the road.
I imagine a little procession

around your patch of forest
where your strongest sisters
carry the weight of everyone's
sadness. I imagine squeaks, howls,
whistling grief. There's an interstate
nearby and—because you were no doubt
reared by intergenerational horror, by
the smoldering shadow of artificial horses
stalking—I imagine, swallowing knots,
your family mourning with their ears
to the wind, ever wary of the possibility
that someone they love may be struck down
in broad daylight by the seering hand of despotic
transience. I drive on, cursing my own kind, invoking you,
I'm so sorry. If I see your mother I'll lie and tell her you
went peacefully.

LASTO BETH LAMMEN, O ETHUIL ...

by Hibah Shabkhez

Enno onna enno enne.

I like watching your children die, O Spring.

When the leaves fell in the Autumn, gilded by age, I smiled to see them carpet the earth, remembering the glorious miracle of their birth, and thinking upon the rich green Summer of their youth. I welcomed the Winter of bare branches and snow that would teach my world to yearn for you to come among us again.

But this year, Winter came twice. And it has not yet stopped coming.

When the little leaves began to sprout, and the delicate little buds to peep out, Winter, greedy Winter, could not bear the thought of yielding its grip. So it sent down fresh flurries to smother your children in their sleep under its fiercely beautiful coconut-slices of snow.

I like watching your children die, O Spring.

I saw your friend the Wind take up arms against it then, shaking the branches free. Then you sent us once more the glorious dream of a Summer of strength and an Autumn of grace before we yielded to the inevitable Winter.

But winter is not done yet. Winter is here.

It is crushing your children to death again, swathing the world in white and strangling out every other colour from it. Winter is come for your blossoms, O Spring, and they must die before their time. Not for them the promised Summer of love and life and laughter, not for them the slow mellowing of Autumn, and the poignant beauty of bidding farewell to life. They shall be smothered in their cradles in the arms of their mother trees.

I like watching your children die, O Spring.

O Spring, will you still dare to come to us again, to trust your children to us? Know that we will do nothing for them. We will wind the wool tighter around our heads and let the white swathes smother them, over and over and over again.





VANILLA AND DUST

by Lauren T. Davila

Luz feels something familiar about the middle-aged woman that sits slumped by herself in the back booth closest to the storeroom. Her blonde-white hair's in a high bun, perfect enough to show that she used to dance, but off-center enough to let everyone know it's been years since she was at the barre.

But Luz finds herself watching one curl hanging down that catches every time the air conditioner turns over. The man-made air breathes life into the strands, separating one from another until they hover far apart. Luz can't tell what she is supposed to get from the sad woman and her abandoned wisp. Not yet at least.

Papa hands her a slightly dirty towel and a menu that's barely laminated anymore and motions to the woman with his gnarled hands. Motioning to her to fix the situation in a way only she can. So, she grabs both items from him, skin brushing his gently, a kiss of family expectations and coffee grounds. He always wants her to move faster, make it better, grow up, do it all, so the shop can be hers. He says it's her future that he worked hard for; she sees it as just another way to stay buried.

But with no way to express that besides screaming, Luz minnows around chairs and jackets which have fallen to the floor and an abandoned baby pacifier to get to the woman in the corner.

"Hi, welcome to Nubarrón Cafe," Luz says softly. The woman jumps. "Here's a menu for you. Would you like water while you look it over?"

"A water would be great," the woman says. She smiles, revealing one dimple, right under her eye, as if someone sewed a permanent tear into her skin. "Do you have any specialties?"

Luz stares at the woman and the curl and the dimple. The dimple which tugs at something deep within Luz's memory but she ignores it and smiles in an instinctual mirror. Tries to tap down the tug to look up. To look past the twinkly lights her older sister bought from the dollar store. Past the stucco ceiling dropping asbestos-like confetti into the food and coffee. Past the roof, coated in pigeon droppings and sun-rusted metal. Past it all to see which clouds have formed to make life easier for this woman.

"Yep, we call it the Comfort Cloud. Espresso and cream with our special family blend of spices."

The woman hesitates and Luz sees the picture clear in her mind: the Mammatus clouds she'll corral and drop onto the surface of the steaming coffee. A whipped cloud of bubbles and persuasion and waiting to uplift the woman's spirits. She nods and hands the menu back to Luz, who remembers the last time she saw that same teardrop of a dimple



Luz was seven the first time she called on a cloud. She had been knobby knees and barely contained energy, peering out with watching brown eyes from the kitchen window behind her

Mama's yellowed drapes. Her next-door neighbor was eight with hair like vanilla ice cream, a dimple she liked to stare at when he wasn't looking, and a lightsaber he carried everywhere he went. Trailing it behind him, he made shapes in the dirt lot the family next door deemed a backyard. He made sure to make the lightsaber sound with every swirl, figure fours on an exhale. Round and round, circles and squiggles and laughter until something leaped from the ground: long and quick and better at slithering dirt than the boy ever was.

Luz bolted from her hiding spot, not needing to be concealed anymore. She didn't call for help; no one was home. It was just her, and her energy, and her quick feet carrying her to the boy and the abandoned lightsaber.

Thinking back later, she didn't remember doing anything special. She didn't cast a spell or use a magic word. But one moment, the boy was sobbing, small hand putting pressure on an already swollen snakebite. Then, as he passed out, Luz was holding whiteness, lighter than the cotton balls her cousin used to clean up red nail polish their mothers called a shade of the devil's kiss.

She held the cloud in her hands, cherished it for second before wrapping it around his ankle, tightening the wisps until they knitted themselves into his skin.

Luz sat with him, mouth dry and hands clenched until he woke up. He gave her his lightsaber. He didn't ask questions. She gave him her magic. She cried when he moved away.



Luz stayed over her Tío Martin's house every Wednesday while her parents went to night classes at the local community college. When she'd wake up each Thursday, her Tio would sit down at the wooden kitchen table, a hot pot of coffee right in the middle of the plastic, yellow gingham tablecloth and breathe in the fumes.

So there, with the smell of comfort floating through the early morning sunshine, Luz confessed the moment with the snake and the cloud and the boy. And her Tío started training her how to call the clouds.

Tío Martin told her it started by concentrating on the thing that made you take a second look at a stranger: a mole, a scar, beautiful eyes. At least that's the way he learned. When Luz pressed about the magic and the clouds and who could summon, he didn't have answers.

Maybe others could call the clouds down too, but that wasn't important. What was important was that she could. And this was how she would learn.

Her Tio said he would look at her nose and she would look at his. After weeks and weeks of nothing but Luz crinkling it up or trying to lick the tip with her tongue, her Tio yelled at her in Spanish clipped and harsh she felt in her bones.

He whispered about concentration and smelling condensation and the way air patterns whipped around the needs of each person.

Luz thought he was probably just fascinated by noses.

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Until he looked at Luz one morning after a night of her dreaming about falling into the crack at the side of her bed and drowning in the ocean. He looked at her nose, one specific freckle right at the tip and opened the window.

Just a crack.

But that was enough to allow the steam from the fresh pot of coffee to mix with the morning air.

Luz stopped breathing when the waves formed. Years later, when she knew each cloud better than the stretch marks across her thighs or the discography of the Beatles, she'd identify them as Kelvin-Helmholtz clouds.

Formed when instability is present. When what one thinks they know and what they come to know slip past one another. When the crest is too much and all one can do is hold on and hope to come out the other side.

And she crested the moment he grabbed a wave by its break, rolled it up, plopped it in a cup of steaming coffee, and slid it across the table toward her.



While Luz brews the coffee for the sad woman at the counter, she thinks about how every day is the same. Her parents put her behind the bar the moment Tío Martin told them she was a cloud caller. She looked at her Tío, waiting for him to stand up to her parents for her, to say she was just a kid, to say she wasn't ready for the job or the pressure. And when he didn't, some of the magic died. Her parents decided to commodify the family gift and make it a selling point. Her Tío wasn't needed to call the

clouds for the shop so he left her with cold coffee and memories of the empty house he moved out of in the middle of the night.

So she stared at noses and dimples and scars to make coffee. To make “a cup of coffee to clear your clouds.” The tagline Nubarrón Cafe written across t-shirts and mugs and in the store window and on stickers they gave to kids who were dragged in by their parents. Her only job was to summon the clouds, plop them into mugs, and give them to people who didn’t even know to say thank you for their problems being fixed.

People who didn’t think to question why a 16-year-old girl was running ragged around the store as soon as school let out, taking orders and making them behind closed doors. No one asked questions about the specialty drink which tasted different for every single person who took a sip.

The tired college senior studying Roswell and aliens and New Mexico, who came in every Thursday, tasted chile powder and the Turkish espresso her grandma used to make. Luz made sure to corral a few Lenticular clouds and plop them in her coffee—the closest thing the college student will get to a UFO while hope still defied gravity.

The best friends who were way too touchy-feely to be totally platonic. But neither wanted to make the first move. One tasted salted caramel; the other dark chocolate. Luz shaved Cirrus Radiatus onto their whipped cream, knowing someday they would converge into the horizon. An actuality, not an illusion. One day the touches would mean everything.

A group of men in their 80s, matching cycling outfits every Sunday. They ran their mouths about immigration and gun

control and that damn President and everything in between. Luz made sure they tasted cinnamon when she rolled up Morning Glory clouds and dropped them in their coffees. Maybe then they'd finally simmer and understand words meant nothing if they just kept looping their bikes around the block.

Different people came in needing different clouds. But she never had a chance to ask her Tío how to summon a cloud for herself before he left. How to make it taste sweet or seeped or soft. Because as much as she tried to call the clouds for herself, nothing happened. She stared at her nose for hours in the bathroom mirror. Nothing. She moved on to her ears. Her eyelashes. The ear piercings she got as a baby. Anything to show herself what she needed.

Sometimes, after hours of staring into her eyes, she'd get wisps. Barely there, barely visible, and they wouldn't materialize enough for her to manipulate them. Never enough to get in the coffee cup. Never enough to figure out an actual answer.

So, when her parents asked her once what she tasted, she blurted out dust and vanilla bean and left the room. She couldn't bear to tell them that all she tasted was bitterness and being left behind.



Luz places the cup of coffee down lightly in front of the woman, who beams up at her politely. She waits for the nod or wonder or something when the woman takes the first sip. But before Luz gets satisfaction for her work, the woman's phone rings. The Star Wars theme song cuts the tension and she answers hurriedly, speaking French with the Spanish name of the

cafe thrown in. Luz waits until the woman hangs up to ask:

"How do you like it?"

"It's perfect," the woman says. "Just like my son makes it at home."

A flash of white lightning streaks by and the woman is covered in lanky limbs and frantic French. Chatter fills the booth, and Luz chokes on their happiness, chokes on the familiar smell of dust and gratitude from a boy who used to give her a reason to want to leave the house. She knew she recognized the woman from somewhere. Maybe later that night, she would have excused the woman's dimple as childhood nostalgia or a wonky memory.

But she can't do that when the blur of a boy turns around and locks eyes with her. Lightsabers and snake bites flood her bloodstream in an instant. He's taller and wider but his hair is the same vanilla ice cream and his eyes remember the girl who stayed by his side in the dirt.

"Luz," he says, all statement as if he was expecting her.

"What are you doing here?" she says quietly.

"My mom and I moved back last week," he says. "My grandmere passed and we didn't really need to stay in Paris anymore, so we came back. And Yelp said this is the best spot for coffee. Can I have a cup of whatever my mother has?"

Luz nods, as if she knows where he went or his grandmere or his life. Without a word, she moves back over to the counter and tries to covertly look at him.

She doesn't know what to do. As she tracks over his features, more freckles than bare skin and a scar running across his top lip, she doesn't feel the tug.

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No Nimbostratus or Altocumulus.

Nothing.

Just like her.

With shaking hands, she pulls a double espresso shot and dashes heavy cream into the hot mess. And then she freezes, hoping the clouds will take pity on her and do her job.

"Is that one mine?"

His voice interrupts her fruitless prayers and she pushes the drink toward him, saying nothing. He takes a drink and his face gives nothing away.

"Good," he says. "But it could be better."

And then he looks at the crack in the window and calls up the wisps. Her wisps that have been hovering and waiting and looking for a master. He stares into her eyes as he spins them around in his hand until they form sugar floss, which he drops into the drink.

Luz waits for him to taste it, to feel the nothingness and the bitterness and the emptiness of being left behind. But he pushes it toward her and waits. Hesitant, bracing for the tannins to tear into her tastebuds, Luz takes a sip.

The moment the dust and vanilla hit the tip of her tongue, she's floating in an ocean she found on her own, not in some nightmare, Her childhood neighbor, no, her childhood friend, reaches out and brushes his hand right over hers, not a clasp but a promise.

"I'm glad to be home," he says, understanding without any words. "I'm going to go sit with my mother, but I'll come back tomorrow."

And Luz watches her childhood restore itself.

The booths seem brighter and the menus look less dingy. For the first time in her life, her family's coffeeshop feels warm and open. She doesn't think of her parent's expectations or her Tío. For the first time, she doesn't feel like she'll drown under the weight of her future.

She takes another sip and finally understands the true purpose of the clouds—to reflect parts of yourself which need to be reclaimed.

**content warning:
colonialism, addiction, police**

Isla de Encanta

by Evan Martinez

I'm surprised to hear my father
offer empathy like some kind of gift: did you know

our blood springs from the same
underwater volcano in the caribbean?

Your abuela used to tell me it was
dios crying hot tears for his mistakes.

Your face gets scrunched up just like His,
never able to figure out why

the expanses of this prefrontal cortex
are a minefield built on indigenous land.

I'm thinking about the subjugation of my people
in the name of destiny manifested by cruelty

And trying not to have a panic attack because I might explode
and then the cops come chasing violence and i told them

on the phone no cops just EMT please
call my cousin and tell her thank you for being so good

for studying environments, a thousand ways to resuscitate a body
of water, a human body made of water is always at risk of drowning

please no cops and my mind sneaks up on itself and there are cops
and

there is a panic attack. Lungs arrested

heart racing brain filling with air
of dread and lavender chamomile and adobo—

One poem a day keeps those yt demons away.
My sister taught me that and how to love with fire.

I wake and ask the mirror
If you could destroy anything with one punch

what would it be? I've spent hours rolling the question
from thumb to middle finger, back to thumb

and up to index, desperately searching for a nonviolent way to destroy
the nuclear family, the capitalist leech, the mortal insecurity

it requires to turn your stupid suffering body away
from other stupid suffering bodies, and on

and on until there's nothing innocent left—only
the hollow remains of humanity's self-loathing:

maxed out credit cards slashed by the talons
of sleep-deprived landlords, huddled masses siphoning

water jugs poisoned for sick sport where
treachery is the only winner, homeless saints

smoldering piles of rubber tires, condoms, pacifiers,
cosmetic facial augmentations contorted by time, and

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on and on past the liquid ghosts of glaciers,
headwaters assaulted by infernal man-made crime,

gray cash caskets of forests long gone,
infected bile of the deep blue sea, and on

past the vultures flogging themselves
to determine who gets to eat today—usually

they who live through pampered torture may reap
the sorry benefits of this faulty simulation and on

past the politicians auctioning off public land
for a few hundred feet of greenery where they'll build

monuments to a weezing healthcare system
while their constituents starve in the vestibule, and on

past the haphazard borders separating nothing
but the will to go on knowing you live

on the same land as your apathetic foreign policy
bathing lasciviously in dark red, coquetting

your narcotized eyes so obscurity is just another
sickness you can whitewash away, and on

Dead stop. I'm trying not to think about how my brother's middle school is teaching him warmongering as an elective:

hands on Venezuela, preachers on children and jingoists applauding the vibrado of lost humanity. My margin notes say we should start over,

pilgrim to geothermal vents and live our lives among the resilient, those crustaceans and fish abiding by only the fire in their veins.

Yes, g*d, let's shed these vessels and give our spirits to the universe that birthed us. Where better than her depths?

The voices we remember sound like history deliberating reality—
What do we know of what happened? What will we choose to forget?

Police presence, undemocratic intervention, loved ones painted on the road,
ceaseless lashes of calculated starvation, power masquerading as freedom.

Do you remember where we began?
When anything was real?

I used to, but I've gone the way of the blesséd volcano,
destroyed with one punch. My abuela always hated my darker half.

My father cries at my grave why oh my god why!
All our ancestors hands linked in sacrificial blood,

the cataclysmic fury of spaniards enveloping
the looted resilience of muisca and taino peoples,

the insecure cosmic lust of genocide painted into
every ultimate one of these red white and blue flags

sprawling over all peoples of the caribbean, blanketing the
continent in reliable streams of incineration,

toppling colectivos to erect banana republics,
flogging the people as the land as the rivers as the sky,

scorched earth humanitarian aid, imposing sanctions,
foaming at the mouth of the river

that leads back to the volcano
that we feel under our skin, as if our ancestors knew that one
day

we would need it to finish the work of the diaspora,
breathing love, blues as deep as the caribbean herself,

making un hogar
wherever our gorgeous shattered spirits should land.

Snowbird

by Andrew Olvera

The heat beat down on the Sonoran Desert, just as it did all year round. Though it was November, the old glass thermometer that clung to the window of my father's convenience store still held upwards of ninety. The air conditioning was on the fritz but Father refused to fix it since *"It's going to cool down any day now."* He'd been saying that every year since my mom passed ten years ago. She had always been the handywoman of the family, so it was likely his Chicano Honor held that he not admit to not knowing how to fix something, nor that he pay someone to do the fixing.

"Uh, excuse me?" someone asked, slamming down their drink. "Can you explain this to me?" she said, gesturing at the slushie on the counter. She was one of the women who frequented the shop, a soccer mom with a bright-pink cardigan and hair pulled back so tight you could barely see the wrinkles that had begun to form across her face.

I looked down at the drink, which I'd noticed had sloshed out and onto the rack of lighters beside the register. "It's called a slushie, ma'am. It's a frozen beverage—"

“Consuela,” I corrected, but she continued without missing a beat. “What I want to know is why it has liquid in it,” she stated, rolling her eyes and clattering her manicured nails against the counter top.

“Ma’am, when something is frozen, like your beverage, and it sits in a location that is in the nineties-” I said, noting the thermometer on the window, “it tends to, well, melt.”

Sharon, or maybe it was Barbara, did not accept my response and left in a huff, claiming that she would be writing a stern Yelp review when she got home. I believed her, of course, since she’d written at least one per week for the last eight months or so. She even advised, on more than one occasion, that I use a different name on my badge, so as to not look “like an illegal.” It was unclear why she didn’t just go to the Circle K across the street but I hadn’t the time to ask.

“Aye, chihuahua, what’s her problem?” asked the now sole-customer in the store. Her name was Alejandra. She worked in the tattoo shop next door.

“Her slushie melted,” I said, in a whine that echoed Barbara’s. Onto the counter she set her usual, an energy drink and a honey bun, and I was already grabbing her a pack of menthols and two of the scratchers with the luchadores on them.

“It’s gonna be \$13.78, please.”

While Alejandra fumbled to pull out her wallet, the chime above the door sounded. Beneath it entered in someone I knew couldn't be from around here. Looking to be in his late fifties with a look that screamed "I'm a snowbird," socks-with-sandals included, he looked as if he wanted to get mugged by the group of fourth graders that roosted in the alleyway between my and Ali's shop.

"Get a load of that guy," Ali laughed under her breath. She passed me a twenty, never taking her eye off the strange man.

"Where do all of 'em get those hideous tropical shirts, you think?" I asked, stifling a chuckle. I punched in the digits and withdrew the change once the register violently spit out the drawer.

"I bet they're part of a club," Ali said, already opening her fresh pack of cigarettes. She beat them against the palm of her hand and opened the flap. Ritualistically, she pulled one out and put it back in upside down before drawing another and placing it behind her ear. With a simple thanks, she left the shop to go on with her day. It was just me and the snowbird.

"Let me know if I can help with anything," I recited in the fakest customer service voice. He nodded while rummaging through the rack of magazines closest to the door. Repeatedly, he'd pull out a mag' and mutter, "no, no,

that's not right," under his breath. It was at magazine sixteen that I felt the need to step in.

"You sure there isn't anything I can help with, sir?" I prompted, walking slowly down the long aisle.

"Do you have road maps?" he finally asked, looking up at me. He pushed his thick-lensed glasses up to the ridge of his nose with a curled index finger.

"I mean, yeah, but don't you have, like, a cell phone or something?" I asked, a little surprised. Even my abuela, who'd turned ninety-three last June, had a smartphone by now. She even Instagrammed pictures of her elderly pit bull a few times per day.

Quickly inserting the magazine back into the rack, the man swiveled and made a beeline towards me. Under his breath, he whispered "this is a matter of national security. I need a map of the local region and any news you can get me about animal attacks within a fifty-mile radius."

"So, that's a no on the whole having a cell phone thing, I take it," I said, nodding along and slowly moving my hand to the big red button under the counter, in case things took a turn for the worse.

"Uhm, yeah, we have the maps up by the cash register, with the sunglasses. And, uh, I can Google it, I guess?"

"Yes, do the Google, please," he grunted, then went to the rack to grab a map.

"You looking for anything in particular?" I asked, searching the news feed. "Like attacks on animals or attacks by animals? Because, honestly, both are a lot higher than I thought they'd be. Five kids, just in the past week, were attacked while out in the desert, and seven local farmers a few miles south of Tucson reported that their cattle were killed. The local sheriff's office reported that it was likely that mountain lions were going into rural communities in search of food or water because of the heat wave and the almost non-existent monsoon season."

"Just what I thought. Perfect!" he exclaimed with an inappropriate frivolity. Clearly, he noticed my concern and further explained, "I am tracking this beast."

"You know that I said the sheriff's off—"

"I know, child, but your law enforcement is hardly a match for it," he interrupted, rather bluntly. Before I could say another word, he darted out of the store, making off with my 99-cent travel map. Purely on principle, or maybe because I knew what Father would say, I threw up the "away from register" sign and booked it out the store.

Outside, the sidewalks were empty and traffic minimal, but he was nowhere in sight. I looked down the alleyway beside the shop but there were only children with chains and bats, so I assumed that wasn't his means of escape and, seeing as it was a 99-cent piece of paper, let him

have it. Giving up, I turned around and went back inside to pour myself a melty slushie.



“And he just ran away?” Javi asked the next day. The kid’s real name was Javier, who was fresh out of high school and often worked the shop with me. It was the day after the Snowbird came through and I’d just finished showing Javi the tape from the security camera above the register. There was still something bugging me about the whole incident. Could it really have just been the sandals with tube socks?”

Yep, still owes me that 99 cents,” I lamented, clearly not upset enough to take my eyes off my phone screen. I was busy clacking away on the screen, scouring the web for any link between that strange man and freak animal attacks. So far, I’d found a grand total of zero hits. Of course, it didn’t help that I had no idea what his name was and was only going off “strange man and wild animals,” “sandals man and wild animals,” and “old guy seeks animals.” That last one in particular was a bad choice of words. Eventually, I went back to the original search of animal attacks to see if there was anything I was missing.

“What do ya think he’s doing about now?” Javi said after a lull.

"Well, he wanted a map of the local area and said he was tracking 'the beast,'" I reiterated, "I'd say he's probably hunting some big cats."

"Oh," he said. Yeah. Oh.

But then I found something.

"Hey, uh, Javi," I said, tapping his shoulder with the back of my hand. "Y'heard of el Chupacabra?"

"Like the urban legend?" he asked, shooting me a look of confusion.

"Look," I said without answering. On the sixth page of the search, I'd found an article from almost twenty years ago that proclaimed a series of what had been ruled as being mountain lion attacks were actually done by el Chupacabra. While it didn't have photographic proof to back up the claim, there was a picture of a person who'd witnessed an attack. My stomach instantly sank.

"The Snowbird," he uttered in awe. And there he was - the Snowbird. This time wearing a suit, but not looking a day younger than from when I'd seen him. Javier and I exchanged a look that encompassed shock, horror, and confusion all in one.

"Special Agent Gerald Krantz, who appeared shortly after local police arrived on the scene, insists what farmer Francisco Gutierrez claims to be el Chupacabra is likely a coyote with severe case of mange," I read aloud, taking time to take everything in.

"If he thinks it's just another coyote or mountain lion, why is he so interested?" Javi asked, "especially twenty years later looking exactly the same? Something's going on here, Connie, I'm telling you."

His questions mirrored my own and I was left with more confusion than I had before I'd discovered the article. All questions pointed to the Snowbird, but I was at a loss for what to do next.

For the rest of the evening, business was slow. The monotony of a job in customer service hit hard in the wake of making such a strange discovery. I'd replenished the shelves, changed out the empty bladders for the soda fountain, and mopped the floors before the increasingly overwhelming sense of anxiety that festered within the shop felt like it had swallowed me whole.

"Javi, you good if I duck out early?" I asked, knowing full well he'd say yes. Being the shop owner's daughter didn't warrant me a coveted position within its ranks, but it did allow me more leeway than other employees. Without waiting for a response, I took off my highlighter-pink vest and tossed it over the counter, then exited the store.

Outside, Ali stood in front of the window to her shop, smoking a cigarette. Before I'd even made it to her, she'd took out her pack and tossed it to me. I caught it and pulled a cigarette out, placing it in the corner of my lips

while I fumbled off the pack and pulled out a lighter.

Ali began to wax poetic about the life of a struggling artist, but I could hardly pay attention. The Snowbird still clung in the back of my mind, driving me past curiosity and dangerously close to obsession.

“You think time travel’s real, Ali?” I asked without regard for a segue or the fact that she was in the middle of speaking. My question confused her but after she thought about it for a moment, she spoke.

“Nah, it don’t make any sense,” she said with a grimace, flicking the ashes from the tip of her cigarette.

“What about, like, aliens?” I continued, taking a drag off the cigarette.

“Nah, they don’t make any sense either,” she said, doing the same. “You okay, Connie?”

I laughed, not really knowing if I was. I felt like I was going crazy.

“I don’t really know. Ask me again tomorrow.”

With that, I flicked the butt of my cigarette into the ashtray above the trash can and headed off.



I was nearly home by the time I got the alert. The local news app for my phone notified me another child had been attacked at the eastside Saguaro National Park on the other side of town. I sat there at a red light, reading

and rereading it so many times I missed when the light turned green. The man behind me laid on his horn and jolted me to attention. I floored the gas and took off from a screeching halt.

By the next light, I'd turned my blinker on, ready to pull into my apartment complex at the next right. Closer and closer I got to my turn, until I passed it altogether. I shook my head and mumbled a string of profanities under my breath. I was going to do it. I was going to find the Snowbird.

I had twenty long minutes in between my split-second decision and my arrival at the park. I second guessed myself half a dozen times just between stop lights, but my morbid curiosity kept me going, cramming the self-doubt into a locker like some dweeb in between classes. Sure, that may have been an odd metaphor to use, given my age, but I often found myself regressing back to a high school mindset when stressed out.



When I arrived at the Saguaro National Park, it was nearing sunset and the emergency services were packing up and heading out. The girl had been rushed to the emergency room with serious, but not life-threatening, injuries. Now, there were only three cars in the parking

lot: mine, a police car, and an older beater that looked to be on its last leg. Considering the police were taking down the caution tape as I was pulling up, I had a pretty good guess as to who the third car belonged to.

I parked and got out of my vehicle, making sure to grab the small pocket knife I kept in the console. I headed to the beat-up car first to make sure there was no one inside. The police officer sitting on his own watched intently, but so did most in a place like Tucson, so I took it for only superficial reasons.

There was no one in the car, which meant that the Snowbird would be out in the park somewhere. I flicked open my knife in one hand and grabbed for my phone with the other, just in case I needed to use the camera. Or call emergency services. I looked back to the cop in his car and sure enough, he was still eyeballing me. I gave a nod and began to walk down the dirt trail in pursuit of the Snowbird.



Barely five minutes in, I already felt tired. And dehydrated. And miserable. I quickly found myself wondering why people would ever do this for fun. Still, I pushed on. I was going to continue on for the only two reasons I had: he was weird and I was curious.

I made for the largest hill within the vicinity of the parking lot, hoping I'd see the Snowbird's lights. The sun had finally set but when I got to the top, I couldn't see any sign that the Snowbird was out there. I kicked myself. Why had I come out all this way? I felt like a fool, like one of those tin hat-wearing conspiracy theorists. I hung my head, preparing myself for the hike-of-shame back to the car. But then I heard a growl. A deep, guttural growl. It sent chills down my spine and the sense of security gained from my pocket knife dissipated at the thought of trying to take down a mountain lion with a three-inch blade. I slowly turned to face the beast, doing my best to puff my chest out to appear bigger. It seemed that my love of nature documentaries was going to be my saving grace, until I laid eyes upon it.

The thing stood on two legs, maybe three feet tall, with big, red eyes and spikes running down its spine. Saliva ran through its razor-sharp teeth and out its mouth. It hunched over, sniffing the air, then rattled its claws against each other. Clearly, this was not a mountain lion.

"Tío was right," I muttered under my breath, then addressed it. "You're el Chupacabra, aren't you?" There was no outward sign that it understood what I said, but it was worth a shot.

"Alright, mijó, I don't wanna hurt you," I told it,

brandishing my knife. I would've laughed at myself if I wasn't already trying to stave off a panic attack. Unfortunately, my attempts at intimidation were unsuccessful, and the monster took several steps toward me. I tried to calm my heart rate, deep breathing and all that, but tunnel vision had already set in and I was locked on to el Chupacabra. Slowly, I stepped backwards to further the distance between us. If I could give myself enough of a head start, maybe I could stand a chance at outrunning this thing.

"Just stay there," I willed it with everything I had. Just stay there. Just stay there. Just— CRUNCH.

I winced, squeezing my eyes tight, in realization of what I'd done. It was a fallen branch, laying just so as I distanced myself. The noise of my foot breaking it in two alerted the monster of my plan of escape. It let out a high-pitched snarl and displayed its teeth, jaws opened so wide that they looked unhinged. Taking off with unbelievable speed, it charged at me, closing the distance before I could react.

In a lunge, it sunk its claws into my shoulders and dropped me to the floor. Screaming in pain, I impaled the monster with my knife. I struck it right in the abdomen and twisted it inwards. It let loose a howl, but its pain only angered it. The spot where its abdomen touched mine

began to feel warm and wet as its blood pooled onto me. Despite its injury, it clenched on to me, sinking its claws further into me. I writhed in agony, sure I was done for. I grabbed its throat with my offhand, trying to fend off the massive set of teeth, but could feel my arms growing weak against the force of the monster.

Quickly, I worked to bring my knees to my chest, then pushed them out against the monster. I managed to gain inches, maybe six or seven, to work with now and the monster's arms were no longer able to dig its claws into my shoulders like it had. With the short distance now between us, I was able to see that the blood was not normal, but a noxious green that shimmered in the moonlight.

"That is gross on- gah -so many levels, hombre," I managed, but the blood had already begun to cover my knees and thighs. In seconds, my legs had become so wet from its blood that they gave in, slipping against el Chupacabra's slick, scaly sides.

Losing the advantage, the increasing sense of dread began to overwhelm me. I was going to die there. I was going to be killed by el Chupacabra because I went off into the desert in the night, just like Tío said would happen. I was going to die, and that sheriff's office would say it was because of a mountain lion. I was going to die

because a weirdo in tube socks and sandals stole a paper map from my father's shop.

As I lay there, looking the monster in the eyes while it snarled and lashed at my face, and it just stopped with a flash of light. The pupils of its bright red eyes rolled to the back of its head and its body went completely limp against mine. I could barely process anything that was going on but after a moment, my senses returned to me. To my left, I heard footsteps approaching, crunching in the sand.

"You alright?" they asked me, but I wasn't quite sure what to respond with. I definitely was not okay, but it may be rude to say considering whatever they'd done had just saved my life. Looking over, I saw him. Approaching me was the man himself, the Snowbird. When he reached me, he lay down the rifle in his hands. It was metallic, shiny, and had several glowing buttons. It looked like something you'd see in Star Wars. He knelt and pushed el Chupacabra's body from atop me, then helped me to my feet. Just then, I realized he was wearing the suit I saw in that old newspaper, but now not in black-and-white, it was teal in color. He dusted off my shoulders and looked at the wounds on my shoulders.

"Here, you're hurt," he said abruptly, ignoring my question, then went off to where he had come from. About thirty feet away, he had dropped a case. Returning

with it, he set it back down and opened it. It was empty, save for a panel laden with buttons. He pushed one of them, a “plus” sign, and suddenly the empty space in the case began to glow. There was a spark of light and then materials appeared inside of the case.

“What is that?” I asked while Snowbird searched through the contents and grabbed a small bottle that looked like a tube of toothpaste.

“Superliminal travel kit,” he said, as if I should know what it meant, but he realized my confusion and continued. “I can access several kits that exist in the vault with only the touch of a button. Med kit, cooking kit, repair kit. I got a hundred of ‘em. But let’s get you patched up before we go any further.”

He opened the bottle and brought it to my injured shoulder, then squirted a gel onto the wounds.

“Funny thing is, though, my navigation kit doesn’t work. We don’t have satellites out here,” he said with a chuckle. That would explain needing a map.

“And who’s we?” I asked. Every answer only served to raise more questions. I wasn’t quite sure if I should stay to hear more or run in the opposite direction.

My skin began to feel hot where the gel touched it. It stung, like a wasp’s sting. I looked down at my shoulder and couldn’t believe what I saw. My skin had started to close, reattaching itself as if pulled together with stitching.

In a matter of seconds, the wounds had completely disappeared.

"It'll hurt internally for a little while longer, but this'll keep it from getting infected," Snowbird told me while inspecting my shoulder to ensure everything was okay.

"You didn't answer my question." He returned only a look of annoyance, but after a stare down, gave in.

"I suppose it won't hurt," he said, eyeing me suspiciously. "The beast that your world calls 'el Chupacabra' is not of this planet. It is a transdimensional being from a solar system far from here. It escaped custody of the police organization of my planet, of which I am a part of. It crash-landed on this planet decades ago."

"Are you telling me you're from another planet?" I asked, baffled at the idea. "You're a cop from another solar system, and the urban legend, el Chupacabra, is a transdimensional what now?"

"Transdimensional being," he said again, "These creatures don't just move through three-dimensional space like you and I, they can move through the dimension of time. While the scientists of my planet discovered methods of creating a time machine, your 'el Chupacabra' can do so without aid of technology. It's biological. Evolutionary."

"So, every sighting of him...It's all the same thing?" I asked, trying to put the pieces together.

"Precisely," he said. "While the legend of el Chupacabra has existed for over twenty years on your planet, I have been chasing him for a matter of weeks." He spoke so matter-of-factly that I felt compelled to believe him. The science of it made no sense to me, but who was I to argue with the man who appeared in that newspaper from all those years ago?

"And Gerald Krantz?" I asked.

"A cover identity. Just like the tourist getup," he shrugged. "But now I think it's time we went our separate ways."

"But what about what happened here? What's going to happen?" My questions were shot in rapid-fire, but he remained silent as he turned back to his case and punched in another number. There was that flash of shimmering light and then a small, rectangular object, reminiscent of a camera, appeared inside. He took the not-camera from the case and turned back to me.

"I'm sorry, kid," he said with a sigh. He raised the object and I feared the worst.

"W-What's that gonna do? Scramble my brain? K-Kill me?" I sputtered, holding out my hands.

"Please, I'm not gonna tell anyone. Who'd believe me? You've seen how people react to Chupacabra sightings. It's a joke!"

And then, he paused.

“Huh,” he said, lowering the not-camera.

“Huh?” I repeated.

“Maybe you’re right,” he said with a shrug, then turned his attention to the body of the Chupacabra. He brought his briefcase over to it and pressed a button that looked similar to the symbol for WiFi, then opened it after a flash of light emitted from it. Inside, there now were several small disks, about the size of the palm of my hand, which he took and began placing onto the body of the beast.

Moments later, the disks began to blink and el Chupacabra faded in and out of existence until it was gone completely.

“It’s done, then,” the Snowbird stated, looking to me with a near vacant expression.

“Done?” I repeated.

“The body of the beast, your ‘Chupacabra’, has been sent to my ship and is awaiting transport back to our world,” he said, “which, I suppose, means you have nothing to base any claims you may make. I believe that sounds ‘done’ to me. Do you disagree?”

“So, I go free?” I asked, skeptical he’d let me off the hook that easily. Only a minute earlier, he’d made to erase my memory, or even potentially kill me, depending on what that device would do.

He shrugged again. "Perhaps, or perhaps you may be of use to us. It won't hurt for Gerald Krantz to have a contact, should he ever have to return to your world in the future. So get back home, go about your life as usual. Act like none of this ever happened, and maybe one day you might be called upon to help in the protection of your planet and the continued concealment of my own."

With his final words, he held out his arm to look at his watch and pressed a button on its face. A shear, white light surrounded him and his body flickered in and out like the Chupacabra had done before him, and soon the light faded and he was no longer in front of me.

"Beam 'em up, Scotty," I said with a chuckle, looking up into the clear, night sky. There was no sign of his ship, but I knew he was up there looking down upon me.

I lingered there for a while longer before the night's chill laid its grip upon me, and so I made my way back to my car, wondering if I'd ever see the Snowbird again.





**content warning:
gun violence, anti-Black slurs,
anti-Semitism**

Places to Find the american Flag in Arizona

**by Raihana Jacqueline
Haynes-Venerable**

On the cap of a man who sat in front of me and my dad at the movies.
His wife and kids, munchin' on that salty Harkins popcorn.
Pre-previews playin' and I'm scrollin' through twitter & I hear the usher,
"Sir, I'm sorry but you can't have that in here."
Next thing I know the man, sighs, un-clips his holstered gun, asks his
wife for the keys, & exits.

At each cash register inside Sam's Club.
A place you can buy cleaning supplies, packaged snacks, outdoor
furniture, & liquor in bulk.
Not sure there's anything more american.
A guy passed me, looked at me funny — maybe I just felt that he did.
He came back around & I clocked the confederate flag tattoo on his
calf.
He was wearin' a Ham Porter "You're killin me, Smalls" t-shirt.

18 07 04



On most of those campaign posters on the corners of intersections.
Surprised me to see that none appear on Sheriff Joe's senate posters.

Counted somewhere round 20 at the dealerships on Bell Rd.
Don't know if I shoulda counted the blow up chicken wearin' a flag suit
on the Ford lot.

A couple large ones hoverin' 'bove all the cars, a buncha little ones
slotted between the cars.

I ask myself, "Why so many?" and "What they got to do with sellin' cars?"

On the lawn of the neighbor down the road &
on the columns in front of the house next door &
at each entrance of three suburban neighborhoods on Lindsay Rd. &
one in the center of my own suburban neighborhood on Lindsay Rd. &
in the parking lot of America's Home Furniture Warehouse &
at the entrance to the freeway &



At Western Sky Middle School out in Litchfield.
Probably at every elementary, middle, & high school in the state.
Probably doesn't end at the state.
Such weight, hangin' over the heads of children.

In my last year in undergrad, The Occidental College Republican Club
a.k.a The Oxy Conservative Club
a.k.a The White Folks Who Might Could Get They Ass Beat Club,
planned a “memorial” for the victims of 9/11.

There’s something about the sight of three thousand american flags
— standing at attention along the edges of the quad —
That placed me back, inside myself at five, standing in front of my home
Seeing a swastika and the phrase “leave niggers” for the first time
Funny how these symbols have become to me
A blended family of ~~symbolic~~ hatred

On the massive F-150 parked right next to our car in an otherwise
empty parking lot a decal on the windshield depicting the statue of
liberty holding not flame but firearm

18 08 10

*Oh Lady Liberty do you embrace or defend?
Oh Lady Liberty do you bring shelter or death?
Oh Lady Liberty are you for us or for them?*

Word Bank:

america	Guilty	Price
Birth	Gun/	Prison
Borders	Gun Control	President
Bombs	Healthcare	Republicans
Capital/	Heroes	Respectable
Capital punishment/	Independent	Responsible
Civilized/	Individual	Rights
Civil/	Innocent	Sanctuary
Civilization	Immigrant	Soldiers
Country	Legislation	United
Death	Liberation	United States
Decimate	Nationalism	United States of america
Defend	Naturalization	Villains
Democrats	NRA	Voters
Democratic	Patriot/	Wall
Drones	Patriotic/	Warmonger
Freedom	Patriotism	

"Did you see it?"

the flag the flag the flag that
flag

shredded flag limply waving out front the Walmart

black and white flag upside down inside that Black film flag

bikinis flag towels flag toilet paper flag lingerie flags on fingernails flags
under my skin flags in the soles of my feet flags blocking my vision flags
watching flags

staring me in these eyes

& where does it end?

this need to be reminded we are *free*

this constant barrage of red stripe, white stripe, white stars, blue guns

& how do we end it?

this need to visualize *freedom*

these constant depictions of sacrifice, supremacy, sanctimony



At the airport as I leave back to school in California
experience becomes dull. muted. shape-shifty in the mind.

and still I seek to understand

your desires of me,

mine of you.

was it the heat that made me see you

endlessly, incessantly

behind the eyelids, mini-mirage, you puzzle of illusions

say

something





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**content warning:
murder, parental abuse,
sexual assault**

Lessons

by DW McKinney

When women died, my father rose from the couch. The sagging leather lay folded in on itself as if protected against the weight of his anger. The cushions then unfurled in spasms. Almost skittish to embracing the peace, afraid to be whole again. They need not worry. That anger had moved on to the rest of us, bellowing through our split levels and echoing against the vinyl. Running to his bedroom, Daddy stomped three times. Once for our attention. Twice in warning.

I'm not havin' that!

My sister and I shuffled from the isolated worlds we created in our downstairs bedrooms. We gnashed our teeth and boxed the air under the hallway landing. We remained hidden behind this boundary. Where we were free. The cool air slipped away as we stepped forward up the food chain. Past the front door and last hope for salvation, then the garage and master bedroom. Into the sweltering dining room where Daddy waited.

Y'all got a lil' attitude, huh?

He lined us up side-by-side against the table. Hands perched on his hips and chest puffed out, he appraised us. The oldest then the youngest. Both of us together. Each step back and forth laid the track for our subjugation. Trinkets rattled in the curio cabinet. Their chimes a faint death knell to our innocence. We were his recruits. His maggots. We were in his world now.

Stand up straight!

There was much to prove in the space where we ate. The dinner table served as medium for celebration and condemnation. Fried chicken and smoked ham. The sins of each other's pasts. These lessons were a delicacy.

Try something and see what happens.

When the news ended, every lesson began the same. A wolfish grin curled Daddy's lips. We were his red-hooded prey. We were seen and not heard. Something was wrong with us. Depression, anxiety, yes. We hid these ugly truths under the covers with us. Twisted our bodies around them at night and wished them away. But he didn't know this. No. There was something worse.

You are nothing.

My sister and I rolled our eyes. This was all a joke to us. We first met this drill sergeant when rainbow knockers and plastic barrettes hanged from our pigtails. Our bones matured on a diet of intimidation and scare tactics. We knew this routine.

The thing about perception is that you can never see all the way around it. We thought we knew his capacity. To force obedience. To scare us into acquiescence. To crush us. Daddy barreled across the room. His Nikes bumped against our bare toes. His forehead pressed against ours. The enormity of him erased us. I inhaled sweat and bursts of rum and coke. Recoiling from his spittle on my lips lured him closer.

I dare you. Do something.

Cracks ruptured and steamed in that thin space as we breathed the same breath. A primeval creature clawed against the tension. It arched and hissed under my skin. Hackles raised, it longed to render Daddy to flesh and bone. But his presence, so heavy and thick, smothered the creature's life. It was always easier, safer, to stare at the carpet instead.

Now, that's what I thought. Punk.

We would never make it in the Corps, he ranted. There was no such thing as personal space. No censorship for the obscenities raining down on us. No qualms against the profane spark generated when a father pressed against the budding adolescent bodies of his daughters. If we didn't like it, we could always try to beat his ass. I welcomed the challenge and lunged for his throat. Tore away at the sharp-edged words ready to cut me down. My hand bloodied, I blinked back to reality where I instead pulled inward. Made myself smaller.

I'm the baddest muthafucka in this house! Rememba dat!

The reminder loomed as I crouched and begged on the stairs. It pushed against me while I washed crusted spaghetti off the dinner plates. It poked my head as I fried catfish and hot links. I flinched when it darted into my periphery. The baddest muthafucka was the most dangerous. I never forgot.

Now we know who's in charge. Pay the fuck attention.

Lesson one. When dead women appeared on the news, it was their fault. Men got them because *those dumbs broads didn't listen*. We could not trust men. All men. Men only wanted one thing. Their intentions were clear to our father. I was too book smart and not street smart. My sister was *whateva*.

You are so naïve.

I was too dumb to see. I could always be coerced. Daddy never explicitly said what I was dumb to. What boys could make me do. That vital education stayed locked behind his prudish lips. But I knew things he never taught me. Learned them from a girl in my fifth-grade math class. She forced me to hide her porno magazine. Those shining black bodies and wide spread legs knocked the scales from my eyes. Daddy meant that I would give it up. I'd be one of those bucking women on page nine.

Y'all don't know shit.

Lesson two. We had to man up. It was not a request. We were *his* daughters. He expected more from us. We weren't like our *little friends* out there. We couldn't wait for life to defeat us.

You gotta toughen up.

More meant being better. Better was ground into our bodies. It wrenched our arms. While we screamed, it kneed our backs. It pressed its calloused fingers into our wrists. It balled into fists and pounded throbbing frogs into our legs. It pulled us into chokeholds until we nearly pissed our pants. More was Daddy's love.

I ain't raise no punks, aiite?

Lesson three. He ordered us to use pressure points to disable a man. Any man could be taken down if we tried hard enough. We just had to try, goddammit!

Don't be a victim!

Daddy learned in the Corps that pressure points were everywhere. He pushed his fingers into our palms and biceps. As we writhed in the fetal position, he found them in our feet and legs. He parted our screams to discover one in our necks. Under the weight of his strength our entire bodies were a ripened point. The human body was a canvas for us to destroy. Perhaps now, if I were bored, I could pick a fight with a man to hurt him the way

Daddy hurt—no—taught me. I could dig into his wrists. Then the soft flesh of his thighs. I could paralyze his neck and his side. Perhaps, if I were bored, I should choose no man at all.

You're both weak.

Lesson four. There was no hope for us.

Kill the muthafucka instead.

My sister and I practiced what we'd do to the man who'd try to get us. We maimed invisible men in our rooms. We garroted attackers with shoelaces. Our Bibles became bludgeons of a different nature. We were always in a room full of weapons against an attacker who never moved. Who was never someone we knew. We reacted to the space in front of us and won.

We get it. We're not stupid!

My sister kept a steak knife in her backpack for protection. It cut up its insides and shredded loose receipts. Later, a pink can of mace dangled from her keychain. She practiced holding it so as not to blind herself. Don't be a victim! punctuated the air as she practiced stabbing men that might leap from the bushes as she walked home from work at night. I cheered her on, shouted to Daddy that this would be me too. Away from their gazing eyes, I stumbled out of nightclubs. Weave matted to my head, breath stinking of Long Island. I blundered into dark alleys daring the

world to crush me. I took a chance with a blue-eyed boy I met on a sober day. His presence fed the awakening erupting at my core.

Don't talk to him.

A thread loosened as we kissed through a month of weekends. I brushed it aside until there was another. The whole tapestry of us hanged ragged on the wall. My grandmother taught me to cut loose threads. That minimized the damage, she said. But these, I wanted them to show me the foul pattern that made them. I pulled each thread and unspooled the truth. I had failed the first lesson.

My girls are not victims!

I confronted this blue-eyed boy about his lies. He pushed me down and stripped me. My power. My clothes. I laid frozen in the dirt, staring upward for the will to move. Lessons whispered to me from the velvet sky swallowing my naked body. The second lesson winked from the heavens, brighter than the morning star.

Just stay alive, goddammit!

Daddy's words chased me in the aftermath. They filled my lungs like cement until I choked. They battled the imprint of this boy's hands on my thighs, his body forcing itself against mine. Clawing and hungering. They were eager to rip me apart for my sin.

What the hell are you doing?

Giving in. Because I had to. Those blue eyes pestered me. The phone shrieked day and night. He begged to see me, had to see me. Why was I ignoring him? The phone creaked under my grip. I clenched my teeth tighter with every word. I listened for the inevitable pop and metallic taste coating my tongue.

Come see me or else I'll come there and search for you.

My father's essence haunted me. It muttered disappointments in my ears at dinner. I heard him sucking his teeth as I drifted to sleep. I dreamed of his rage, the disgust buckling his lips when he heard the news. His spirit harangued my every move. I thought of my father and what I should do. Must do. I called the boy and we agreed to meet where I could be seen by the sun and not the silent witness of night.

You're not a victim.

Towering acacias guarded me I marched, head bowed along the streets. Their sprawling branches spied the neighborhood ahead of me. Their blossoms murmured secrets on the breeze. Halfway there I listened to a silent guardian telling me to look up. A cloth flickered behind a tree in the distance. The blue-eyed boy was waiting to ambush me. I stifled my rage and suppressed the urge to run away. I would always be swallowed by the thought of him if I did not go through with this.

You think this is a joke?

It's in realizing my advantage that I shed my skin as prey. The hide withered as I left it in the shadows. The quickened steps and hunched back of a spurned creature elongated and rippled. My body thrummed to a thrill rising inside me. I picked my way along the tree line, hiding behind the trees as I anticipated his moves.

This time I've got you.

Those blue eyes leaped out. His crooked teeth cut a cruel mask of delight. His arms grasped the air where I would've been and halted at the knife pointed toward his throat. Anger welded the sharp metal with my hand. The point, my index. Its handle, my bone. A strange pleasure bloomed inside me.

Didn't see that coming, huh? But I saw you.

The words tumbled like bricks from deep in my throat. Rough and hard, bitter at their core. They scraped forward and built a new me under the swaying acacias. This last lesson I learned on my own.

You don't get to do that anymore!

Lesson five. It's the audacity of my violence that restrained him. Not the now-screaming mouth he once kissed. Not the sharp brown eyes he once loved in serenades. The potential rendering

of his flesh from his body. The thought of being shattered by me, stopped him.

Remember this!

Electricity rippled through my body. It lusted for his pain to replace mine. Anger frothed behind my teeth and bucked at the glinting blade. It begged to make him understand. But this wasn't just for him. My back was no longer pinned beneath a man's knees. I refused to pull inward.

Do you hear me?





**content warning:
anti-Blackness**

Mis Tias

by Mimi Tempestt

mis tias
let the word “nigger”
drool from their mouths
when my mother isn’t around
only seven years old
i eat at their kitchen tables
checking my arroz for bones before biting
pretending not to know
the bitter smell of cigarettes and chile relleños linger in their
breaths
as i kiss their cheeks for goodbyes
when my mother asks how my visit was,
i only comment on the food
my only memory of them,
good enough to keep

**content warning:
eating disorders, colonialism,
racism, sexual topics, nazis**

WHEN DID MELANCHOLY BECOME COOL

(FOR CHRIS CORSON-SCOTT)

by Hana Pera Aoake

SEXUALLY REPRESSED. INTELLECTUALLY INSECURE. MASTURBATING GENTLY. IT'S OFTEN HARD TO DRIVE OUT THE BAD THOUGHTS. I THINK OF MYSELF AS LESS A POET AND MORE A RODEO CLOWN. TOMORROW I MAY DISAPPEAR. WHEN I WAS THIRTEEN I SAT ON A FORD FALCON IN AN ORGANZA STRAPLESS GOWN WITH A TIARA. SORRY FOR BEING CONFUSING BUT ALWAYS IMAGINE ME THIS WAY. MAKE SURE YOU IMAGINE ME WITH TADPOLE EYEBROWS AND SLUT STRANDS AND RED AND BLACK STREAKS THROUGH MY HAIR. REMEMBER IT WAS XTINA DIRRTY ERA. EVEN AGED THIRTEEN I KNEW INSTINCTIVELY THAT RED AND BLACK ARE MY COLOURS PERHAPS NOT AS BIG CHUNKS. I WANTED TO BE WHITE LIKE XTIN AND COMPLETELY HIDE ALL SIGNS OF AGEING AND INDIGENEITY. I WILL ONE DAY HAVE SOVEREIGNTY OVER MY BODY. I ACCIDENTALLY SEEM TO ALWAYS WEAR RED AND BLACK RED AND BLACK RED AND BLACK RED AND BLACK TINO RANGATIRATANGA BITCH ĀKE ĀKE ĀKE !!!!!!!!!!!!!

THE VERY YOUNG GIRL BECOMES OLD. I SANG AM I NOT PRETTY ENOUGH BY KASEY CHAMBERS AND I MEANT EVERY WORD. WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO SEND A VIDEO WITH YOUR FACE TALKING? I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE THAT COMPLETELY IGNORES MY NUDES WHEN I SEND THEM IN FAVOUR OF DISCUSSING CAPITALISM. IMAGINE BEING AN ART DEALER AND SAYING 'I'LL LET MY STAFF CONTACT YOU' AND 'I MAKE SO MUCH MONEY'. MONEY MAKES ME MORE HORNY THAN YOU DO. SPIT ON THE \$20 NZD WITH ITS PICTURE OF THAT QUEEN LIZZIE

KISS THE \$50 NZD WITH ITS PICTURE OF SIR APIRANA NGATA. I THINK I WOULD REJECT BECOMING A DAME AND TELL LIZZIE THE TO SHOVE IT UP HER ASS. PLEASE PROTECT MEGAN MARKLE AND BABY ARCHIE. FUCK HARRY HES A NAZI. BREXIT. ENGLAND IS SO RACIST AND IT'S FUNNY GOING THERE BECAUSE YOU REALIZE THEY COLONIZED MOST OF THE KNOWN WORLD BUT THEY JUST DON'T CARE. I THINK A LOT ABOUT HOW LIZZIE AND HER HUSBAND ARE SECOND COUSINS AND HOW WE, THE ALIENATED 'OTHER' ARE FRAMED AS THE SAVAGES. LIZZIE'S HUSBAND'S SISTERS WERE NAZIS AND EVERYONE CONVENIENTLY FORGETS THIS LIKE HOW DODGY DIANA'S DEATH WAS. RIP. EVERYONE IS WORRIED THAT ALL THE BORDERS IN THE UK WILL CLOSE. I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH THE VIDEO OF BORIS JOHNSON STUCK ON A ZIPLINE DURING THE LONDON OLYMPICS AND HOW AND WHY EVERYONE FOUND HIM CHARMING EVEN THEN WHEN ITS OBVIOUS HES A FASCIST HES EVEN WAVING THEIR FLAG.

I WANNA BE BAD WITH YOU BABY. I HAD A DREAM YOU WORE CHAPS AND WE WERE IN A BOXING RING. I HAD TWO TONE BLONDE HAIR. WE WRESTLED BUT DIDN'T HAVE SEX. YOU SMELT LIKE CINNAMON AND I SMELT LIKE PASTEL DE NATAS WHICH WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE. THE NEXT DAY YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE SICK BECAUSE YOU WERE CLEANING MOULD OFF OF THE WALLS AND I THOUGHT ABOUT FAMILIES IN SOUTH AUCKLAND WHO ARE DYING BECAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM. ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IS A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE THAT OCCURS IN PRACTICE AND IN POLICY WITHIN A RACIALIZED CONTEXT. EG: WE CAN'T DRINK OUR RIVER WATER BECAUSE OF DAIRY RUNOFF. WE ARE TOLD NOT TO SWIM IN OUR RIVER BECAUSE OF THE DAIRY RUNOFF. NANA'S URUPA IS GOING THROUGH EROSION BECAUSE THEY BUILT FARMS AND HIGHWAYS AROUND IT. I TOLD YOU THE OTHER DAY I CAN'T EAT DAIRY IN NEW ZEALAND ITS POISONED MY RIVER AND MOUNTAIN. HERE I ONLY EAT GOAT'S CHEESE BECAUSE I REALLY HATE GOATS THEY ARE SO AGGRESSIVE AND MY OLD FLATMATE GARY DECORATED OUR HOUSE WITH GOAT'S SKULLS AND I HATED IT EVEN THOUGH I MISS LISTENING TO ELECTRIC WIZARD AND BLACK SABBATH WITH GARY. GRETA'S FACE ANNOYS ME AND I'VE MADE A POINT NOT TO SHARE HER IMAGE BUT TO INSTEAD FOCUS ON AUTUMN PELTIER BECAUSE I WAS COMPELLED MORE BY HER TALKING ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PAPTŪĀNUKU AND THAT WE GROW IN OUR MOTHER'S WOMB IN A SACK OF WATER. AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE JUST DO EVERYTHING BETTER THAN WHITE PEOPLE DO.
LET'S BE HONEST.

APPARENTLY XTINA AGUILERA HAD A STAFF MEMBER WHOSE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY WAS TO MASSAGE HER FEET EVERY 30 MINUTES WHILE SHE WAS A HOST ON THE VOICE. I KNOW TWO PEOPLE WHO WERE ON A BIG BROTHER TELEVISION SHOW AND BOTH OF THEM TALKED TO ME EXTENSIVELY ABOUT PRIVACY AND ANXIETY. AS A CHILD I WANTED TO BE AN OLYMPIC SWIMMER AND TRAINED AND TRAINED. I DREAMT OF BEING IAN 'THE THORPEDO' THORPE OR LEISEL JONES 14 YEARS YEAR OLD IN LANE FOUR FOR THE 100M BREASTSTROKE IN 2000. SHE'S GOING TO WIN IT. JONES GETS TIRED BUT SHE WINS. WHAT A MOMENT. SHE SWAM A CONTROLLED RACE. LEISEL JONES BEATING THE DARLING OF AUSTRALIAN SWIMMING, SAM REILLY. I USED TO THINK ONLY IN PERSONAL BEST TIMES. I USED TO HAVE WEEKLY FAT TESTS AND HAVE TO EAT EAT EAT BUT NEVER SUGAR OR ANYTHING FAT FAT FAT I WANNA BE THIN THIN THIN FOREVER. I USED TO WATCH MY MUM DO AEROBICS AND COPY HER. I WANT TO FEEL GOOD. I LIKE THAT U LIKE EXERCISE. YOUR SO TALL THOUGH SURELY YOUR HIPS AND BODY IS STIFF LIKE CONCRETE. I'M COMPETITIVE I WANT TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE THAN U BUT I ALWAYS WANT TO BE THIN. I WANT TO STEP OUT OF MY BODY THE FLESH PRISON. OKAY YEAH I MEAN OBVIOUSLY I HAVE AND BENEFIT FROM 'THIN PRIVILEGE' AND 'WHITE PRIVILEGE' AND IM EDUCATED ETC BUT LET ME HATE MY BODY AND SEE IT ONLY AS SOCRATES SAW ALL BODIES.

THE BODY IS A PRISON

SMH

I HOPE YOU DRAW A KAWAKAWA BATH EVERYDAY UNTIL YOU FEEL BETTER I DIDN'T TELL YOU BUT YOU SHOULD SAY A KARAKIA EVERY TIME U PICK IT. I FIGURED TIKANGA MIGHT NOT APPLY TO YOU BECAUSE YOU AREN'T MĀORI. I FEEL BAD FOR MAKING THIS JUDGEMENT AND NOT TELLING U. I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE AS MAD ABOUT THE WORLD AS ME WHICH FEELS V THREATENING. HOW DARE YOU BE AS ANGRY AND POLITICALLY FRUSTRATED AS ME? BUT ALSO THANK GOD TO MEET SOMEONE AS ANGRY AND POLITICALLY FRUSTRATED AS ME. BLESS U BLESS U BLESS U. DON'T WORRY I'M NOT RELIGIOUS. SOMETIMES WHEN I TALKED TO YOU ON THE PHONE IT FELT COMPETITIVE AND I FELT GUILTY FOR NOT BEING AT IHUMAATAO. I REGISTERED YOUR TONE AS LOOKING DOWN ON ME. LOOK IT'S MY PRIVILEGE AND MY PAIN THAT I'M IN EUROPE AND NOT ON THE WHENUA OKAY U STUCK UP BITCH. I WANT U TO THINK I'M SMART AND HOT NOT JUST SMART I LIKE THAT U THINK IM FUNNY THOUGH AND I LIKE MAKING U LAUGH U ARE SO IMPORTANT TO ME

I WANT YOU TO WATCH MORE CHEERFUL TV SHOWS AND FILMS. I WANT TO HOLD HANDS SOMETIMES SO YOU CAN SEE THE CALLUSES EMBEDDED INTO THE PART OF MY HANDS WHERE THE PALM MEETS MY FINGERTIPS. I WISH WE COULD BE TOGETHER BUT NOT ACTUALLY EVER PHYSICALLY BE TOGETHER. I WANT TO BE IN LOVE WITH U BUT MOSTLY I WANT TO BE IN LOVE WITH ME. I WANT U TO RUN YOUR FINGERTIPS ACROSS MY HANDS. I WANT TO SUCK ON YOUR FINGERS AND I WANT TO SUCK ON EVERYTHING EVEN IF IT'S POISONOUS AND NOT GOOD FOR ME. I WANT TO HAVE SEX WITH YOU THATS BETTER THAN PORN BUT I WORRY THAT U PROBABLY HAVE VANILLA SEX BECAUSE YOU ARE A CANCER LOL. I WANT U THOUGH SOZABOUTIT. I KEEP THINKING ABOUT LADY GAGA SCREAMING 'I DON'T WANT TO BE FRIENDS' IN THE BAD ROMANCE VIDEO. I WILL BE UR FRIEND UNTIL IT ACHES TOO MUCH WHICH IT WILL INEVITABLY. I THINK U WOULD GET BORED OF MY DIVA DEMANDS BUT THEN UR A DIVA TOO JUST ALL OUR RELATIONS ARE GENDERED. I AM WORRIED U HATE ME. ARE WE / YOU IN LOVE? NO I'M IN BED. WHEN DID MELANCHOLY BECOME COOL?

-HANA PERA AOAKE (Lisboa, September 2019)

One Day I Will Tell My Children That There Used To Be Beautiful Trees Everywhere

by Evan Martinez

They'll say, Daddy tell us a bedtime story and I'll set the scene:

The banks of my memory were overdrawn, flooded
by waste produced upstream. I was baptized
by ecological disaster, spawning hatred, lapping up my own dysfunction.

I saw heaven fall from the sky, sorry remains
populating the shallows of gray matter,
corrupt cherubs averting their gaze, pulling themselves from earthly fissures,
reconstructing an expensive new homes
instead of saving those withered by catastrophic molt.

I saw political pundits playing cards
around a slab of rock, side-eyeing and neck-craning,
lauded by hysteria and dread,
battered by the temptation
to go all in.

I saw ghouls sipping the headwaters, cackling
with politicians lawyers and businessmen
incinerating documents doused
in their crimes:
lying, cheating, killing—respectfully.

Contributors:

Hana Pera Aoake (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngāti Mahuta) is a Māori artist, editor and writer currently living in Lisboa, Portugal.

Brenda Bakomora is an artist based in Accra, Ghana. Her artistic journey began with poetry and spoken word which led to theater, photography, film making and performance. Her work explores the phases of the human mind and body and the relationship with the individual, identity and society. She relies on strong emotion, lived experiences and personal connection to create her work. Bakomora recently exhibited photography and performance art at the Chalewote Art Festival in Ghana. It was in the same month she became a film maker; performing and producing two films, "Reverberation" and "Normal" which was screened at two film festivals after the release.

Lauren T. Davila is a writer currently pursuing her MFA in Fiction at George Mason University. She holds a BA in English and a BA in Creative Writing from Pepperdine University. Her stories and poems have appeared in *Mid-Heaven Magazine*, *Peach Velvet Mag*, *In Parentheses*, and *Poets Reading the News*. She splits her time between Los Angeles and Washington D.C., where you can find her writing in coffee shops and swimming in the ocean. Visit Lauren at www.laurentdavila.com."

Raihana Jacqueline Haynes-Venerable is a Black Queer Femme from Chandler, Arizona currently living in San Francisco, California. She received a B.A. in Critical Theory and Social Justice at Occidental College in 2017 and recently received her M.F.A. in Poetry from Mills College. She is driven by the complexities and contradictions of our reality and uses poetry to explore and question every and anything

Chi Ilochi is an 19 year old aspiring writer, poet, journalist, stylist, and designer from Pittsburgh, PA. Being Chi is a multi-talented artist, many of her works have been published in different online magazines, websites, and social medias for creatives. In all Chi does, her main goal is to inspire, to connect, and to free those intrigued and captivated by her artistic mind. Chi is a well-rounded individual with very few limitations in the creative scene. Chi lives in passion, dedication, inspiration, light, and grace. You can find Chi Ilochi on Instagram and Twitter @Igbohippie_.

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Evan Martinez is an empath by nature and a cynic by nurture. The son of immigrants, he was born in Queens, New York and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He holds BAs in English and Applied Psychology. He provides social, emotional, behavioral and academic support to school-aged children in one-on-one support roles. Evan enjoys reading, writing, cultivating joy among all people, and disrupting the status quo. His writing can be found in *Poached Hare* and *Projector Magazine*.

Chital Mehta (*Granada* fiction editor) has authored fiction novels *I Luv My Lyf*, *The Promise*, *Are you the one for me?* and *The Heart's Whisper*. Her novel, *The Promise*, went on to sell more than 6000 copies and was a National Bestseller. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing (Fiction) from Lindenwood University, and believes that every style of art must be cherished to its truest form. The *Chennai Killings* is her latest release. She is deeply passionate about human life and is constantly on the lookout for good stories. She usually spends her time writing 'THE' book and chasing butterflies with her toddler. Currently, Mehta resides in Massachusetts, US with her husband and children. You can connect with her on Facebook, on twitter, or on her website.

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Ale Rosales (*Granada* editor and designer) is a socialist mestizx lesbian from Tijuana. She was previously an editor and contributor for *The Fruit Tree*, an independent LGBT lit mag. She is currently finishing an English major and an Ethnic Studies minor, as well as a part-time teacher. If you want to contact her, you can find her on twitter @sorginale. You can also find her zines at issuu.com/mossmoon.

Hibah Shabkhez is a writer of the half-yo literary tradition, an erratic language-learning enthusiast, a teacher of French as a foreign language, and a happily eccentric blogger from Lahore, Pakistan. Her work has previously appeared in *The Mojave Heart Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *Petrichor*, and a number of other literary magazines.

Mimi Tempestt is an artist, writer, educator, and graduate student who lives in both Los Angeles and Oakland, California. Her works are aimed at disrupting stereotypical narratives around the image and construction of black femmes in media representations. She is invested an authentic expression of self and alludes to the complexity of being black, queer, and femme while navigating through the world.

