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**Legacy, what is a legacy?**

It’s planting seeds in a garden you never get to see.

**Lin Manuel-Miranda, Hamilton**

There were seeds here becoming the main driving force behind this year’s volume of Miambiance. Outside of the office you work, a lot of the driving force behind this year’s volume of Miambiance was coming from the students and staff. It was my goal and hope to reflect the diversity of students and staff sitting down in 1989 and deciding: we should make a magazine. Even this letter, lovingly penned for you, dear reader, would not be here had it not been the Editor in Chief of students and staff sitting down in 1989 and deciding: we should make a magazine. Even this letter, lovingly penned for you, dear reader, would not be here had it not been for the Editor in Chief of students and staff sitting down in 1989 and deciding: we should make a magazine. Even this letter, lovingly penned for you, dear reader, would not be here had it not been for the Editor in Chief of students and staff sitting down in 1989 and deciding: we should make a magazine.

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Celebrating 30 Years of Miambiance
Music

- Cotton Candy Sky
  Gabriel Alarcon
- Wake Up
  Nicole Miranda
- Mar y Luna
  Miles Sterling
- Hoenn
  Miles Sterling
- Vogue
  Miles Sterling

Scan here to listen
Or search “Miambiance Volume 30” on Soundcloud

Cassiopeia

- Vanity
- Beauty
- Decadance
Self Portrait
Nicole Miranda
Mixed Media on Recycled Paper
42" x 36"
I am a failed art project
crafted by young gods who--
in their naivety—
sculpted my body
of stardust and air
and encased me in glass
so, upon falling down
from Mount Olympus to the interstate
I cracked until one day I shattered
glittering spectacularly all over the asphalt
(my gods intended me to be beautiful)

Forgive me if I cut your palms
your blood will be an offering
or flowers at the funeral
please, don’t put my pieces in a box
make something new of me,
a stained-glass window—
put together images of the gods
who crafted me and killed me—
the sun can pour on through me to you
(my gods will be flattered by the tribute)

I do not think it was fair of
the Rhode Island School of Art and Design
to flunk my gods for my destruction
my fragile body was not faulty
it is on purpose I lasted only a very brief time
(my gods were too idealistic for this business)

Higher learning could not comprehend
art they could not sell
and you could not forgive
that I would shred your hands
then beg more of you still
(the stained-glass window auctioned for $100)
His favorite color is orange. I always hated that color.

Laura Gonzalez - Digital Photography
Margarita, tan pura y tan bonita
Siempre tan sonriente, Dios sabe que
no marchitas.

Llevas contigo la esencia de la más
humilde elegancia

y si triste me he de encontrar
me levantas con tu fragancia.

Que importa que no seas rosa,

Celosas deben estar pues les has

robado las mariposas.

Bien sabe Dios, Margarita, que entre
las más bonitas, eres tú mi favorita

porque ni en tempestades marchitas.
La ciudad te extraña
Apaga sus luces temprano porque está en luto.
Faltas tú.
Tu presencia es indispensable
Tu ausencia es insoportable.

La ciudad te anhela
Canta tu nombre al sonido de las campanas
Faltas tú.
Tu llegada es esperada
Tu partida fue insospechada.

La ciudad te llora
Las nubes se quejan y los ríos se desbordan
Faltas tú.
Te extraño, te anhelo, te lloro
Vuelve, la ciudad soy yo.
Angelica’s eyes were already beginning to droop when she scrolled down to the final comment on her newest post. Since the picture of herself she put up was awash with comments, the compliments tended to blur together. She yawned, blinking sleepy tears away as she took note of the person who had left the final comment. It wasn’t someone she knew, which she found strange – she always kept her account on private. The profile picture depicted a person on the moon wearing a spacesuit, the reflective surface of the space helmet concealing their identity. Their username simply read: Cosmonaut. There were a lot of quirky pseudonyms that people used on the internet, so she wasn’t too unsettled. The comment itself, however, made her frown.

How ugly.

She tossed her phone to the side and pulled her floral covers over her more comfortably. It was probably a troll, or some random internet passerby who had said it. It wasn’t true, and it didn’t mean anything. It really didn’t. Still, just before sleep gained sole custody of her conscious mind, a part of her couldn’t help but wonder if she really was ugly.

She awoke the next morning as if being carried to the surface of a dark abyss by strings, delicately and gradually. Without even having opened her eyes to the new day, the words burst into her mind, desperately waiting to be unleashed. The stranger’s words cut just as deep as they had the night before. She threw the covers off herself with half-lidded eyes and stumbled toward her vanity. The vanity was the most prominent piece of furniture she had, taking up an entire wall in her small room. All of her facial products were in the top drawer to her right, a handy place to keep them, considering she always washed her face and did her makeup before anything else in the morning. Her hair products were kept to the left, next to the outlet built into the vanity. This was the second order of business she attended to in the morning. In the second right hand drawer, she kept any lotions or body oils she owned, and in the drawer opposite to it, all her nail polish. She used the lotions religiously to ensure her skin stayed soft and smooth, but while she owned an army of multi-colored nail polish, she spent enough time at the salon getting treatments done that she had all but abandoned doing her nails herself. In the final two bottom drawers, she divided all her hair irons, blow dryers, and nail dryers. These drawers offered the most space, which, considering her massive collection of irons and dryers, was much needed. On top of the vanity was a calendar with all her beauty appointments for the next month. Her appointment for today had a heart next to it, signifying that she wasn’t going to the salon alone.

When Angelica looked into her polished broad mirror, her eyes finally adjusted, she screamed. Her face was grotesque and inhuman, hideous in its otherworldliness. Angelica felt her face with trembling fingers, wincing at the slimy texture. There were deep grooves in her face, and she prodded them with trembling fingers. The skin was so delicate, had she been even a little rougher, she...
would have stabbed a hole through her cheek. Her nose, if it could even be called that, was mushed against her face, and her nostrils were the size of pennies. Her hair was all but gone, save for a few unfortunate strands coming from the top of her head. While she was feeling for them, she accidentally pulled a strand out, and tears welled up in her bulbous eyes.

The phone rang, and Angelica jumped. She almost vomited when she reached out for her phone and realized that the transformation wasn’t isolated to her face – it was everywhere. With the fragile fingers of her hand, she answered the phone.

“H-Hello?“ Her voice even sounded different, guttural and echoing unnaturally.

“Angelica? Is that you?”

“Y-yeah, it’s me. What’s up, Isabelle?”

The woman on the other side of the phone made a concerned noise. “You don’t sound good. I know you really wanted to go to that new spa downtown, but can we postpone if you’re not feeling well.”

“Sorry,“ Angelica apologies. “I just woke up, and I can already tell this is going to be a bad hair – and well – everything day.”

Isabelle sighed in exasperation. “Seriously, Angelica, how many times are you going to cancel on me? It’s okay to relax and let go every once in a while.”

“I know that.”

Isabelle made a noise on the other end of the line, clearly not convinced.

“Really, I do! It’s just – when I was scrolling through the comments on my post from last night, someone told me I was ugly and I-“

“Am beautiful. That’s what you were going to say, right? You weren’t about to say that you actually believe that, do you?“

Angelica glanced at the vanity, the unforgiving glare of the mirror. “I-I don’t know. Maybe.”

“…You know, we’ve had this conversation so many times, but you’ve never once admitted you felt that way,“ Isabelle said thoughtfully.

Angelica’s voice sounded garbled as she answered. “Yeah, I know.”

“What’s going on? Do you need me to come over there? Because I-“

“No! No! Stay where you are! Don’t come here! I’m so ugly, you won’t be able to stand looking at me!”

“Angelica, please! That’s ridiculous and untrue and you know it!”

Angelica heard shuffling on the other side of the phone, and her heart sloshed against her chest with a sickening wetness.

“I’m coming over,“ Isabelle declared, voice firm. “I’ll see you in thirty.”

The line went dead.

Angelica rounded on her vanity, fist colliding with the mirror. The impact rippled from her hand to her face – it was everywhere. With the fragile fingers of her hand, she answered the phone.

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“Really, I do! It’s just – when I was scrolling through the comments on my post from last night, someone told me I was ugly and I-“

“Am beautiful. That’s what you were going to say, right? You weren’t about to say that you actually believe that, do you?“

Angelica glanced at the vanity, the unforgiving glare of the mirror. “I-I don’t know. Maybe.”

“…You know, we’ve had this conversation so
Hercules

Inner Strife
Personal Growth
Strength
is it better not to speak,
or shall i just fall to the ground in agony? flowers don't bloom from my
veins and the old scars. i could be stronger than the delicate reeds
which hang around my neck like a noose tied to the branch of the
cherry blossom tree.

but i am who i used to be,
so we say the planet rotates and the grass grows upwards. the lilac trees
will bathe you in fumes should you break their necks and spines like the
noose which continues to threaten my life. but my approach has always
been to find a new field and lie in it until the great oaks surround me
and i fall into the shadows—into the shallows where i drown and hope
that the world will just let me be.

is it better to speak,
or shall i just slip through your fingers in agony? my limbs will grow
into trees. my hair entangled with the roots of wild blossoms, and my
skin the home for the bed of roses she plans to plant to cover up her
murder—my death.

is it better to die,
or shall i just waste away in the rivers and find that my hands are tied?
the rope is a vine, my fingers are weak, and i cannot find a grip, so i
dive,

i dive,

i dive until it's no longer me staring back in the
glass and my bones break. my knees bend, and i push to pull the tides.
wax wings will come to melt, and the windowpane will give way into
another ocean... in time.

Laura Palmer
a.f. swanson
Mercury Must be in Retrograde, or Something

Sofia Valdeon

Dennis,
I've dreamed of your death
every night this week and each morning
I've woken to my guts sinking like the Titanic

Only when I see your shiny otter eyes
do I deflate apprehension
hissing out of my pores
teary with relief as I say:

I had a really bad dream, dude
Lately, I feel like Rose watching Leonardo DiCaprio sink into the icy North Atlantic his blue body sinks down down down
but never any deeper than right where she can see it

When I ask if you're okay you answer:
Yes (period)

If You're Looking For A Sign - Elizabeth Tellez - Relief Print - 9” x 3”

If so, it must be in retrograde or something

Mercury Must be in Retrograde,
or Something

Sofia Valdeon

Dennis,
I've dreamed of your death every night this week and each morning I've woken to my guts sinking like the Titanic

Only when I see your shiny otter eyes do I deflate apprehension hissing out of my pores teary with relief as I say:

I had a really bad dream, dude
Lately, I feel like Rose watching Leonardo DiCaprio sink into the icy North Atlantic his blue body sinks down down down
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his blue body sinks
down down down
but never any deeper than right where she can see it

When I ask if you're okay you answer:
Yes (period)
Flowers of blue core
blossomed in the night’s nether shore.
The pale shadow of love
wept with blood thieved from streams forlorn.
But what a darling way did hold the ghost!
Its trail bespoke of sublime death and venom mountainous
as the soul scorched and burnt —cynical—
in the ocean of advantageous yet forgot confines of the unthought.
“Lift the veil, being of the innermost,
lofty masochist of times immemorial!
Thou dwellest as no-thing
beyond the bridge whence all illusions were dreamt to be—
thy threshold protected by the impious knight
who sireth but toil in the mouth of light.
Haul what was to be!
This heart pertainst not to me,
yet I bleed, yet I creep through the glass of verity just to sing—
Behold me with eyes of memory in avowal of thy effort and thy pain.
Embrace me ere the nobles of sorrow’s play expel me for willing to stay.”

Quintessence
Alyona Uramuru

Flowers of blue core
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Behold me with eyes of memory in avowal of thy effort and thy pain.
Embrace me ere the nobles of sorrow’s play expel me for willing to stay.”
I'm really anxious right now. There's no way to get you out of my mind right now. Even if there are no distractions, no one to talk to, cause everyone with you eight mostly makes me anxious.

Music, everything. You're everywhere. I've been so numb, so so so so, under and I feel myself breaking.

I need this to hit. I need this pain to only then can I hear. I'm stuck, trapped. Picked up all your and felt nothing, nothing. Pain, why can't I feel please.

I feel in fragment. In moments, but it never is.
i drown when i am untold.

my spine binds together the pages of my skin and flesh. my wings soft and melted, hanging around my ankles. palms cold and eyes calloused. the sun doesn't weigh me down—only the stone in my stomach. frost nips at your bones when i come around, and the sound of my heart only inspires the volley of snow in the west.

here are my hands.

i fell apart for you. i melted into my folds and stumbled on the roots of pines which i hungered for that lived all across the east coast. an ocean of torment with the sand as a winter coat when, in the summer, we don't drink lemonade—we only talk about ghosts. we wear baby blue and show off the matching scars on our wrists.

i am invisible.

these broken wings of mine have been shed down to the bone. you called them false. you ignore their width and influence. you told me that i should clip them and let the devil cut me down; i am the self-proclaimed seraph on my high horse with the thunder coming down. but the truth is zeus was always my father with the sky as my calling.

meet me on the ascendant
but miss me as i take flight
far away from your
envious lies
Corona Borealis

Care
Love
Affection

I am pain covered in skin - Chance Gomez - Digital Photography
I was seventeen when I
first felt the ocean
dipped my fingers into her shore
licked sea foam from my lips
tasted salt and Aphrodite

Only the sea can know

For all I felt
I did not know
as her riptides ripped me
under and filled me
and my lungs to the brim with blue
the difference between rage and passion

Only the sea can know

In her are depths
I cannot see lest she
swallow me up and drown me

Only the sea can know

The Ocean is a Lesbian
Sofia Valdeon
she is the midnight
with dark clouds to
obscure the silver
light of her moon.

she is the illusion of sunshine
hiding behind white teeth
but i know the magpie's eyes
and raven's beak are rarely
anything other than
menacing.

it's a wonder why
i would stand on the sun
if only to get someone
so dangerous to
look at me just once.

does she know what it's like
to be on fire,
or
does she only know how
to turn me to ash?

THE PHOENIX
a. f. swanson
Sorry, Elise,
That I
Almost held your hand
If something is in my near proximity
My hand just
Grabs it

Do you know how many times
I grabbed
Beatriz’s hand?

You know what?
It’s okay
I love you, too

Three times today
I have raised my eyebrows
Twice at Sofi
Once at you

I guess there is an emotion
I need to convey.
Te amé de tantas maneras.
Te amé entera, te amé rota
Perpetua, tal vez algo loca,
Te amé a puños y con ganas
Sin fronteras, sin ventanas.

Te amé de tantas maneras,
y tú,
Tú me amaste como te vino en gana.

Sin Ganas
Leidy Balart

Te amé de tantas maneras.
Desesperada e inigualada,
Te amé profundo, te amé con rabia
Sin protestar ni demandar nada.

Te amé de tantas maneras, y tú,
if i should someday go blind,
i will always recall desperate
eyes and the love of your
longing—skin to skin
even in the endless dark,
my chest will burst into bloom

- and my dreams are pale by comparison

a.f. swanson
After completing his time at Miami Dade College, Tony Chirinos earned his Master’s degree in Fine Arts from Columbia University. He trained as a biomedical photographer for 22 years and became a Fellow of the South Florida Cultural Consortium, most recently earning the Excellence in Teaching Award for 2019 by Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico. His work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally, having been recognized by The Center of Photography at Woodstock and the New York Times among many others. His work has also been collected by many prestigious photography organizations. Currently, Tony teaches as an Associate Senior Professor at Miami Dade College’s Kendall Campus, where he has been teaching since 2003. Tony has also been lending his experience to Miamibiance as our Photography and Visual Arts Advisor since 2017, his critical eye providing guidance for volumes 27, 28, 29, and 30.
After her time with Miambiance, Tamian Wood earned a second degree, this time in Graphic Design Technology. She now works full time at her freelance company, Beyond Design International, where she has been for 25 years. Specializing in book design, she is especially proud of having one of her covers displayed on a lighted billboard in Times Square, as well as designing the cover for Pope Francis’ Encyclical letter “On Care for our Common Home.”

By Leonardo Gonzalez

Matt quickly turned, and through a web of police tape, he saw his dead son lying under the yellow tarp. Matt’s look of fear was authentic. Suddenly, he ran through the yellow tape, fell to his knees, and embraced his son’s motionless body. Matt held his son, as the tears flowed down his face and the officers shouted angrily. Several officers had to help Matt up, consoling him. They could not help but cry. Matt, still carrying his expensive camera, became an ambulance. Matt stood bent over, and pointed the camera directly at Matt.

“Matt, you must be going through a lot of pain right now. Can you please share with us some of your feelings?”

Bill had set up his camera not more than twenty feet from the small black body bag, in which only one sane person could fit. It was the type of set-up that Matt loved; the kind that creates the effect of dread and hopelessness and keeps the morally fascinated glued to their television sets.

I “I won’t let you do this Matt,” Bill replied, “I won’t let you do this.”

“I can’t let you do this,” Bill said. “Don’t give up. You can do anything you want.”

Bill stood right back into Bill’s eyes. “You don’t get it do you? The only thing that matters to me is the fucking story. You remember how I cried when we were interviewing the parents of that retarded kid, the one who was beaten to death by bullies? You were so moved by my sincerity towards them, I bet you really feel for them didn’t you? But I got to tell you something, I was just taking it, pal.”

“It was quite simple really. I just rubbed my eyes when the camera wasn’t on the wall, Niagara Falls. That’s just who I am, Bill, and you’re going to have to get used to it, or you’re going to have to find yourself another job.”

Bill did not say a word. He looked away from Matt, his face a mixture of pity and anger. With his head down, Bill slowly made his way out of the room.

The next day proved to be an odd and uncomfortable one for both Matt and Bill. Outside of the usual daily pleasantries, neither of them spoke much. Matt was in the studio listening to the police scanner, when he overheard a crime in progress. It was another CHD shooting. Right after hearing the news, Bill and Matt were quickly on their way to the scene.

As usual, the Channel 8 van was the first on the scene. The police tape had already been set up, keeping the gathering crowd away from the small body, which lay covered under a large yellow tarp. Bill had set up his camera as close as he possibly could, while Matt finished fixing his hair. As they were ready to begin shooting, one of the officers lifted the tarp exposing the dead boy’s face. Bill caught a glimpse of the face through the lens and a deep knot formed in his stomach.

“Matt,” Bill said, “You’d better turn around.”

“It’s not like I haven’t seen this kind of shit before,” Matt answered.

“Yeah, Matt,” Bill said, “just look.”
After obtaining his AA in 2016, Jason Fontana transferred to Florida International University, where he remained until completing his master's degree in history. During his time in the program, he curated a permanent exhibit for the City of Miami Black Precinct and Courthouse Museum. He plans to begin working towards his History Ph.D. at the University of Miami in Fall 2020. Jason currently lives in Miami with his wife, daughter, and cats.

For Father’s Hands

Jason Fontana

Volume 26

They pulled up to the police station house that doubled as the SS office space. Loder’s second floor lights were the only things visible beyond the walls. Fritz told the Scharfuhrer that he would let Loder know they had both arrived. Once inside, Fritz fumbled for the switch, but was halted by a voice.

"Leave it off," Loder whispered. The pitch was shrill even at the low volume.

"Hauptsturmführer?"

"Were you expecting someone else?"

Fritz still hadn’t gotten used to the SS tradition of every question being an accusation.

"No Hauptsturmführer! I only questioned if."

"Questioned what, Mueller? Me? Are you questioning me?"

"No sir! I."

"Relax, Fritz."

"Yes, sir." Fritz’s heart slammed into his esophagus, but he didn’t pant. Being winded is a pronounced sign of weakness.

"Leave the lights off and follow me."

Fritz scanned the darkened room and picked up Loder’s gait. They headed to the far end of the station house. Loder motioned for Fritz to enter the station house. Loder motioned for Fritz to peer through a small window next to a door.

“What do you see?”

Fritz looked out upon a magnificently lit biergarten. One he had the pleasure of frequenting in his youth.

“A biergarten sir.”

“What else? What of the people? Is that not the family of your friends, Josef and Karl Zimmer?”

Fritz squinted and saw Karl. He was inebriated. “Yes sir, this is the Zimmer family. I should be there now.”

“Oh, in a minute, Mueller. Just a few more questions. Do you know the family well?”

“Yes, Hauptsturmführer, like my own family.”

“Do you know them as well as your own Wehrmacht brethren? Or as well as your Fuhrer?”

Fritz’s heart now redlined against his chest. “I do not follow Hauptsturmführer.”

Loder stopped short of answering, but his eyes told Fritz that he’d be following soon enough.
The Feminine Aspect of the Divine
Jennifer L. Weiner
Volume 27

Growing up, my family wore its Judaism like a pair of skinny jeans one size too small – we squeezed into them only when we had to. Nominally Jewish at best, we diluted our traditions and suffered through them out of habit. Instead of sleeping in or going to church, we attended Hebrew school on Sundays. Instead of hunting for Easter eggs and devouring chocolate bunnies, we scarfed down horseradish on matzo in the springtime. Instead of listening for Santa and Rudolph’s footsteps overhead, we watched the Chanuka candles burn, hoping Nana didn’t light them too close to the curtains again. On Rosh Hashanah, we afflicted our souls. Nevertheless, beyond an affinity for Holocaust stories, I never identified as Jewish.

My Hebrew name is Leah. In the Torah, Leah has a younger sister, Rachel. I had a cousin. We punctuated our generation, the oldest and the youngest. In spite of our age difference and living on opposite coasts, Rachel and I were inseparable like crazy glue to skin. We swam against the tide of our siblings and cousins – lost in their seas of math and science. She and I approached the world creatively: singing, writing, asking why. We shared a sensitivity the rest of our family lacked – it inspired me to fight but overwhelmed Rachel. She wrestled with her yetzer ha’ra, the evil inclination, like Jacob wrestled with God, but Rachel lost her fight. She died of a heroin overdose ten days before her twenty first birthday. Compounding the loss of her death, my uncle decided to cremate her remains. Halacha, the Jewish law, views cremation as a rejection of the deceased's Jewishness and forbids it, yet Rachel’s cremation fertilized the seed my grief planted, rooting me to my Judaism.

I set a course to discover what it meant to live a Jewish life. I enrolled in classes at a local Orthodox synagogue to study Torah, but realized I needed help linking my newfound knowledge with its practical applications. My rabbi agreed – he and his wife extended me the hospitality of Sarah and Abraham. In their tent, I learned to enrich my life through the practices of a religious woman. I luxuriate in my Shabbos (Sabbath) rest and daven (pray) three times a day. I braid loaves of challah in my kosher kitchen like I braided Rachel’s red hair, weaving each strand under, over, through the middle: the past, the present, and future. To memorialize her, I give tzedakah (charity) to organizations that help offset the cost of a Jewish burial and educate disenfranchised Jews like myself. I recite the Mourner’s Kaddish and recall her voice tripping over the Hebrew she never aspired to read well nor comprehend. Through Rachel, I found a perfectly tailored Judaism; I recognize myself, Jennifer Leah, wearing it. It fits. 

Night Sail, Flood Warnings
Maria Victoria Biancardi
Volume 26
Fred Shaw Poetry Contest
Grand Prize Winner - 2016

10 pm.
Red lights.
My car is my compass.
We are flooded,
the roads are severe,
but we careen in silence.
We fade into the dark asphalts,
with water to our calves, elbows?
through currents of gasoline, exhaust.
The waves of highway surf, impermeable.
A garbage can floating in the shallow stream.
mud, lapping the shores of the parking lot, the ATM.
And back from our day jobs, the night can be daunting.
We unfurl. We veer into the zephyr; anchor at every stoplight.
In hiatus we are transformed, deaf and virenscent in the lull of streetlamps.
There, on the corner, it's tempting to slip away.
Capsize, where we are not rushed,
asleep in the undertow,
leaving no wake.

Maria Victoria Biancardi transferred to Florida International University in 2016. During her time at the university, her poem “Encountering the Allograft, Vizcaya circa 1914” was one of five student submissions chosen to be read at Vizcaya Museum and Gardens as part of an honors course led by Richard Blanco and John William Bailly. She graduated in 2018 with a Bachelor’s degree in English and a certificate in Exile Studies. Maria now frequently travels between Miami and Buenos Aires, working as a freelance writer and graphic designer. She is working on publishing a set of poems sometime this year.
“Kol Yisrael arevim zeh la’zeh,” the Talmud teaches us. “All the people of Israel are responsible for each other.”

We are all connected. So I light my Shabbos candles and repeat the blessing Sarah made to welcome the Shabbos. “Baruch ata Adonay, Eloheinu, melech haolam asher kidishanu bimitzvotav vitzivanu lihadlik ner shel Shabbos kodesh.” Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe who has sanctified us with his commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of the holy sabbath. In their glow, I see my cousin’s hand outstretched, one reaching towards me and the other grasping our namesake matriarchs: Leah and Rachel.

After graduating from Miami Dade College, Jennifer transferred to Florida International University, where she is currently working towards a degree in theater with an emphasis in acting and playwriting. Her hope is to continue on to grad school after obtaining her Bachelor’s degree.
FADE IN:

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The theater is modern yet worn, with yellowed paint, and vertical lines that run down the sides of the building. It rained earlier in the day, and the grooves in between the lines resemble faded tear tracks. A big electronic billboard sits above the ticket booth, with ads sliding across it for their new midnight release, “Straight Outta Hell.”

MICHAEL and GABRIEL, young men in their 20s, argue at the ticket booth about seeing the movie with 3D effects, or regular.

MICHAEL
I’m telling you, it’s too expensive! 3D effects aren’t worth paying 30 bucks a ticket for! They’re just going to give us a scratch n’ sniff card and some 3D glasses like every other theater and cheat us out of our money!

GABRIEL
Will you at least give it a chance? Since they’ve renovated, people online have been saying that the characters really pop out of the screens!

TICKET SELLER
It’s true, the characters really do come out of the screen. It’s out of this world. We’ve even added new speakers and temperature sensitive seats to enhance the experience! There’s also a perfume machine that releases smells directly into the theater, so there’s no need for a scratch n’ sniff card. Unfortunately, the 3D glasses are still required for the experience, but the rest is completely designed into the theater.

GABRIEL
See? Even she thinks it’s worth experiencing! Just think of it as paying for a two hour ride at Disney or something.

MICHAEL
Fine, whatever. You’re buying the snacks!

GABRIEL
Fine! Two tickets please.
TICKET SELLER gives them tickets and 3D glasses with a smile.

INT. THEATER - Night

Gabriel and Michael walk into the theater carrying a large popcorn and two slushies. The inside of the theater looks very sleek, filled with black leather seats with embedded speakers. Theater is empty. Gabriel and Michael take their seats in the center and put on their 3D glasses. The movie starts, opening on a scene of demons hanging tortured souls by their toes. Gabriel and Michael wince and pinch their noses.

MICHAEL
My God! Of all the scenes to provide smells for! This is disgusting!

GABRIEL
It is authentic though, you have to admit.

MICHAEL
This isn't the kind of authenticity I was hoping for!

DEMON 1 onscreen opens its mouth and lets out an ear-splitting screech. Gabriel and Michael cover their ears. Their seats light on fire and the slushies melt.

GABRIEL
What's going on? This is insane!

MICHAEL
I don't know, but we should leave this hellhole and ask for our money back!

Agreed. Let's go!

Gabriel and Michael stand to leave, but quickly realize their feet are trapped in an unknown red goop. They begin to panic and struggle to escape the goop. Onscreen, DEMON 1 flaps its bat-like wings and leaps through the screen, flying above rows of empty seats and setting them on fire.

MICHAEL
Take off the glasses!

Gabriel nods and they both take off their glasses. The demon continues to spew fire around them. DEMON 2, a much larger demon, emerges from the screen and stands before Gabriel and Michael. They stop struggling and stare at Demon 2.

GABRIEL
Hey, Michael?
at night, i don’t dream. my mind is alight with a cacophony of the fallen. the heavy storm clouds beg for release, their tears meant to water those who wither until they bloom. so i cut my teeth on dragon scales, and the heat melts my icy tongue away. i used to carry around a yellow pail in preparation for the scorched earth—to put the dragon’s fire out all on my own but the puddle of my tongue is not enough to heal what’s been broken again and again. he whispers fear into my ears and swears to keep all of my secrets should i allow the vultures to remain. i spent so many nights resting my head against his babylonian skull in wonder as i waited for those effervescent sky lanterns to turn into that wrathful hailstorm he once promised me. it feels like i will never stop waiting—i will never stop wanting to flash the dirty mirror towards his cold stare. i still grind my teeth, however, and wake up restless in the mornings with a stone jaw.
I was about thirteen when I was invited to my first sleepover. My friend, Eric, had asked me and another friend of ours, Jorge, to stay over at his house for the night to play video games. All our folks knew each other since we lived in a pretty tight-knit community. Our town was built around this huge backwoods. Nothing alarming would happen back there, so sometimes people would carelessly wander in for a nature hike when it was nice out.

I would walk through there to get home from school when my mother couldn’t pick me up. My parents and Eric’s were chatting up a storm outside when the boys signaled me over to the family room. The game was paused, and Eric began to fill me in on what was really going to happen that night. He explained that a few months back, his neighbor’s dog would constantly bark at night towards the backwoods. Week after week, hours on end, until one night.

“So, the dog starts growling and hollering at the backwoods, his chain yanking from the post until clank. The mutt broke loose and high-tailed into the woods; I couldn’t believe it! I had to find out what was in there, too. I grabbed my flashlight, little league bat, and sneaked out.”

For as long as I’ve known Eric, he had never been a fidgety person. But he told the story as if there was ice running down his back.

“Two nights ago, Eric answered with a shiver. Jorge and I glanced at each other.

“So, you’re telling me that there’s a dog-eating being in the backwoods that you discovered two—”

“Wait! That’s the thing,” exclaimed Eric. “The dog is still alive. It’s beaten up and scratched, but it’s alive. I saw it last night. It was outside, by the treeline of the backwoods, barking at my window.”

“But your neighbors are still making posters for him? You haven’t told them?”

“Well, that’s why I’m telling you guys.” Eric stood up and went towards his closet. I looked at Jorge again. He shrugged and looked over to Eric with a mixture of horror and excitement.

“Two nights ago, Jorge broke his silence, “Hold on a second. You didn’t tell me we were actually going out there. I’m not about to get killed by a devil dog.”

Eric ignored his comment and continued to tell us his plan. “We’re going to wait for the dog to start barking, sneak out quietly, and follow it towards the backwoods.”

“Then we put it down.” Jorge insisted.

“Alright, let’s do it.” Eric replied. He slumped down to his bed, terror written on his face.

“Wait! That’s the thing, “ exclaimed Eric. “The dog barked and barked with its poor little eyes popped. I turned to see Eric holding an air rifle. ‘We’re going in to find that tent and see what’s inside,’ he proclaimed, aiming the rifle towards the window.

Jorge broke his silence, “Hold on a second. You didn’t tell me we were actually going out there. I’m not about to get killed by a devil dog.”

Eric quickly pointed the rifle towards Jorge and screamed “BANG!” Jorge fell to the ground startled.

“Two nights ago, Jorge insisted. Eric quickly pointed the rifle towards Jorge and screamed “BANG!” Jorge fell to the ground startled.

“And if it tries to eat us?” Jorge insisted.

Eric broke his silence, “Hold on a second. You didn’t tell me we were actually going out there. I’m not about to get killed by a devil dog.”

Eric ignored his comment and continued to tell us his plan. “We’re going to wait for the dog to start barking, sneak out quietly, and follow it towards the backwoods.”

“Two nights ago, Jorge broke his silence, “Hold on a second. You didn’t tell me we were actually going out there. I’m not about to get killed by a devil dog.”

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“Then we put it down.”

Besides the fact that we were planning on killing a devil dog, the idea of going through the backwoods at night seemed fun. Nothing bad ever happened in the backwoods anyway.
"I'm in," I said looking out the window, wondering what was to come. "2 votes to 1. Sorry, Jorge."
He just sighed and told us to wake him up when we came back from the backwoods.

The lights were all turned off by 10:30 PM. Eric's parents were sleeping and we were patiently awaiting the barking. Some time had already passed and still no barking. I grew skeptical. Eric was getting doubtful, too. I suggested to Eric that we should lure the dog with some food. We crept downstairs and grabbed a couple of raw steaks when a scream came from the backwoods. We looked at each other and quietly ran back to the room and saw Jorge staring out the window. We joined him and saw the dog outside, sitting at the edge of the backwoods, staring straight at us. Eric began to load his rifle, and I asked if he had anything I could defend myself with. He handed me his bat and told me to pack the meat in my bag just in case. As we climbed out of the window, Jorge gave in and decided to join us. Eric, Jorge, and I ran towards the dog. His tongue out and tail wagging. We got closer to the dog, when it jolted back into the woods.

We ran after it, but it was too fast; we ended up lost. We had chased it deep into the backwoods and couldn't tell where we were. It was tense between the three of us as we tried to find our way out.

"We could've just stayed playing Smash like you told us we were going to do," bickered Jorge. "But no, we want to be adventurous and find zombie dogs.

"Lay off," said Eric in a scared tone. At this point, Eric had lost complete control of the plan and was starting to think the worst. "How about you use that energy to get us out instead of complaining about being here?"

The two continued to argue as I focused on getting out. I looked around and saw a light in the distance. As I was about to open my mouth to tell them, my tongue went numb. I tried to walk towards them but couldn't move. My grip on the bat seemed to have hardened. I tried to make any kind of sound or movement but couldn't.

**I'm completely paralyzed.**

I could just see and hear them, and they were too busy going back and forth to notice me. My eyes darted everywhere until I noticed that the same light was bigger. It drew closer until I heard Eric call my name. Suddenly, the light disappeared, and I regained control of my body.

I went to tell them we had to leave, when out of the bushes jumped the dog and continued to run past us. I saw Jorge run after it, and I followed behind him. I needed to know what this was about. All of a sudden, the dog had made a sharp turn and vanished. Before I realized it, I missed my step and rolled down a hill. Once I hit the bottom, I sat up and found Jorge staring towards his left. I looked at what had him shaken and realized we were definitely in danger. The dog was hanging from a tree. Viciously ripped apart, it was hung by its tail; gnats and flies flew all around it.

"Eric, how could a dog be running one minute, then completely ripped open the next?!" questioned Jorge hysterically. I didn't recall Eric falling down the hill or chasing after the dog. Nonetheless, he looked just as banged up and dirty as Jorge and I. He didn't answer the question and just stared blankly. "Hey, Eric? Are you feeling okay?"

Eric finally answered, "Yes, I'm fine. I found the tent," he said in a low voice. "Follow me."
He went off alone into the darkness. I wanted to get out. I could just run straight and eventually find my way out of the backwoods. "But how could I just run and leave Jorge and Eric in there by themselves?" I was petrified.

"What do we do?" asked Jorge, quivering.
"Run!" Jorge and I turned around to see Eric rushing towards us. I couldn't tell what was behind him but it had the trees moving and the ground shaking. This was it. Our chance to leave. Just run straight. I put my head down and bolted through the shrubbery and branches. I could hear Jorge running behind me, cursing and out of breath. The shaking and pounding began to grow louder as we kept running. Almost as if the thumping reached a crescendo, Eric sped past both of us and stopped in front.

He turned to us, "We're here." A fire lit behind him revealing the tent we heard about. "Go inside." Eric opened the tent and revealed several dead animal carcasses and skulls.

"Dude, what the hell is this?" I screamed at him.
"He needs to be fed," Eric continued, "Or he'll come out." "Who is he?" I asked. I didn't get an answer.
"Hey man, let's just go home."
"No," said Eric, staring at me. "You have to get inside the tent now." I tried to back up but couldn't move. I had been paralyzed again, but this time, Eric was just walking towards me slowly, licking his lips. "You don't want to make him mad."
"Sam," said Jorge from behind me. "Duck."
I crouched down, not even thinking twice. Eric glared at Jorge as the rifle was cocked into action.

"No, " Eric called my name. Suddenly, the light disappeared, and I regained control of my body.

He cocked the rifle again. I walked over to the tent and finally looked inside. I became scared stiff. I dropped the bat and watched as it rolled inside the tent only to be stopped by Eric's bloody, lifeless body. I walked backward in a trance until Jorge grabbed me.

"Whatever I shot wasn't Eric. We need to go now!"
As I went to pick up the bat, I heard movement from whatever Jorge shot. The thing's whimpering became growls, and it started to stand. Its face was canvassed in blood. A pellet managed to hit its left eye, and there was nothing but an empty socket where his eye was supposed to be. It finally stood, wheezing and hunchered over with his arms dangling wildly. Jorge and I took one last look at each other and bolted out of the woods. The fire behind us had been extinguished, and the same scream we heard earlier in the night echoed throughout the trees. I managed to look behind us to witness the thing running on all fours and jumping from tree to tree. I didn't know how long it was going to take to finally make our way out, but like a light at the end of a tunnel, a tiny glow beamed from afar. I threw the bat away and sprinted towards the glow. As I got closer, I recognized where I was running. We had made our way back to Eric's backyard; all the lights in his house were on. His parents probably found out we had left. I grabbed Jorge and hid behind a log.

"What do we do?" whispered Jorge. I couldn't answer. I didn't know whether to run or to scream. I was sure I was going to die that night. Until Jorge asked, "What's with the bag?"

The meat.

The bag with meat was still strapped tight to my back. I opened it and chuckled it all into the backyard. A rustling came from the treetops. We
held our breath as the thing climbed down the tree. It slowly crawled its way to the meat.

Before it could actually take it, Eric’s dad started hollering at the thing to get inside. I could see his mother flailing her arms angrily towards Eric as she waited for him at the sliding doors. They hadn’t noticed his face. As soon as he finally reached the doors, he turned to us. With a smile on its face, it turned back to the house right as all the lights went out. The last thing we heard was the sliding door shut.

I walked home that night. It was silent as Jorge and I went our separate ways. I made it to the front door and opened it softly. Everyone was asleep. I sat motionless on the couch until my mom walked down the stairs and found me a few hours later.

Two days later, the police had come to check on a foul odor complaint from the neighbors. What they found was nothing like an ordinary emergency call.

There was blood splattered all over the walls, and glasses shattered across the floor. The house was turned completely upside down. The only things missing were the residents of the house. There were no bodies found.

The cops wouldn’t believe our story of a shape-shifting monster, but then again, who would?

It still haunts me years later.

Sometimes I look towards the woods, and I swear I can see Eric waving in the distance.
Internal
Ana Vergara
Relief Print
2' x 2'
Go, thoughts, on golden wings;
going, settle upon the slopes and hills,
where warm and soft and fragrant are
the breezes of our sweet native land!
Greet the banks of the Jordan,
the towers of Zion...
Oh my country so beautiful and lost!
Or so dear yet unhappy!
Or harp of the prophetic seers,
why do you hang silent from the willows?
Rekindle the memories within our hearts,
tell us about the time that have gone by
Or similar to the fate of Solomon,
give a sound of lament;
or let the Lord inspire a concert
That may give to endure our suffering.

Afterlife
Redacted from the English translation of “Va, Pensiero”
Gabriela Azeem-Angel

Go, on golden wings;
on the hills,
where soft
breezes
Greet the
lost!

Or dear
prophetic seers,

hang silent
within our hearts,

Or

give
the Lord
our suffering.
The pristine moon had a full stomach now,
Bathing in light revealed her azure eyes.
Paler than her film yet darker than thou,
Her graced boudoir stifled her longing cries.

With bare skin, she sat lost, wondering where
She heard murmurs of her wandering past,
Having the mane of a raging fair mare,
Realizing these moments were her last.

The mirror cracked under her wet gaze,
Caressing the black key to evergreen,
The clock struck twelve with a bloody blaze,
Scarlett puddling with an eerie gleam.

So, tell me now, precious Jane Doe,
why were thou thy only foe.
Gloria al bravo pueblo
The people shout from the streets
As they march,
Banging pots and pans
That echo
Like their empty stomachs.

Gloria al bravo pueblo
Scream the students in defiance
From behind barricades
Made from debris of destruction
Lobbing stones
At the comfortable,
Who hide behind bullets.

Gloria al bravo pueblo
Cry the the parents
Who once laid their children
To sleep in cribs,
Only to rest them now in graves
For daring to fight
For a better tomorrow.

Gloria al bravo pueblo-
Glory, to the brave people,
These children of Bolivar,
Who in the face of adversity
Rise up another day
To spit in the face of tyranny.

Fred Shaw Poetry Contest
Grand Prize Winner - 2019
As they dance to salsa
The movement of their hips, their only freedom.

Cubans don’t know
That their bodies melt into the horizon,
They don’t know that their island sings of them,
She remembers,
She weeps.

They say Caribbeans are the sexiest people around,
But I know Cubans are like a pot of beans and rice,
I know they’re the sweetness of sugarcanes,
I know they’re the intoxicating scent of tobacco,

But—
Rum and scotch are a lonely night kind of drink,
Dry and bitter, like us,
Nothing like a juicy mango.

Mango Juice
Claudia Isidron

Splish, splash,
Mango juice is a breakfast, lunch, and dinner kind of drink,
Sweet and juicy, like us.
They say Caribbeans are the sexiest people around,
But Cubans are mostly known for being “loud.”

Curly hair, tan skin, and green eyes,
Everybody’s mixed in Cuba,
Everybody has negro,
Everybody has taino,
Everybody has Gallego uncles and tías,
But everybody has sickening amnesia.

Cubans like to pretend they ain’t negro,
They like to pretend they ain’t taino,
They like to pretend,
That the light cinnamon of their skin
Is not the result of centuries of rape and genocide.

And if they could,
They would scrub the pigment off their bodies,
They would rip the colored strings that tie them,
Hide every reminiscence left on their skin,
Cubans like to believe that the only race is “Cuban.”

So, they hide their pride under a rug
Because they told us,
That our skin was dirty,
That our hair was messy,
That the only good Spanish is the one they speak in Spain,
That ours comes out weird and strangled,
With a mixed accent of Spanish and French, and Creole and Lucumi,
Different in every part of our island.

They don’t know that they’re beautiful,
That their skin tastes like sugar and looks like café con leche,
That their hair dances in the wind in intricate motions,
Get the fuck
Out of my way
You never
Let me in your lane
Why would I
Let you in mine

How the fuck
Are you driving
Ten miles under
The speed limit
On 104th Street
You should be going
Fifty-five at least

Every driver here
Is a piece of sh*t
Except me

Oh shit—
A cop