



MILLIGAN COLLEGE 2019

THE PHOENIX

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2019

About the 2019 *Phoenix*

From Dr. Heather Hoover

This year's *Phoenix* highlights student work from across disciplines and degree programs, even including our graduate programs. At Milligan, the Humanities core underscores that to be human is to be *imago dei*, and that to be fully human, we must value and cherish creation itself--in the bodies of others, in ourselves, and in the wildness of all that is not human. In these contributions, I see students grappling with how to do just that. In an increasingly market-driven culture, art remains part of who we are, and who we need to be. I love *The Phoenix* because it reminds us that amidst all the due dates and requirements, learning finally to "stand still and be astonished" as poet Mary Oliver reminds us, is a lesson worth pursuing. I think you will enjoy this year's edition.

And finally, special thanks to Professor Art Brown and his graphic design class for taking such care with the design and layout. Despite the many windows open on his computer, he cheerfully offers his expertise and makes this a truly delightful interdisciplinary endeavor. Kudos to Bethany Sodergren for the original cover design, and thanks especially to *all* the student contributors and to their professors who mentor and partner with them.

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Cover and Interior Design:
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About the Cover

By Bethany Sodergren

I struggled quite a bit with the design for this year's cover of *The Phoenix*. Past designs have relied heavily on geometric and organic forms, but they were solid shapes created on a computer. I wanted this design to be different, to look handmade by cutting letters out of newspaper and hanging it with harsh lights. All of this was done to convey my feelings about literature and art. It is not always happy, does not always convey joy, does not always show a perfect world. Sometimes it is rude, sometimes it is harsh, and sometimes it makes you question the world. Art is not always perfect, just as the world is not always perfect, and I wanted this cover to show that sometimes the world is scary and does not make sense. The work contained in this book is beautiful, but it also shows how cruel and grim the world can be. But even at its worst, this world is amazing, it is beautiful, and it is deeply inspiring, and I hope that this book may inspire you. The cover and interior design of this year's edition of *The Phoenix* were produced as part of Graphic Design 460, taught by Professor Art Brown.

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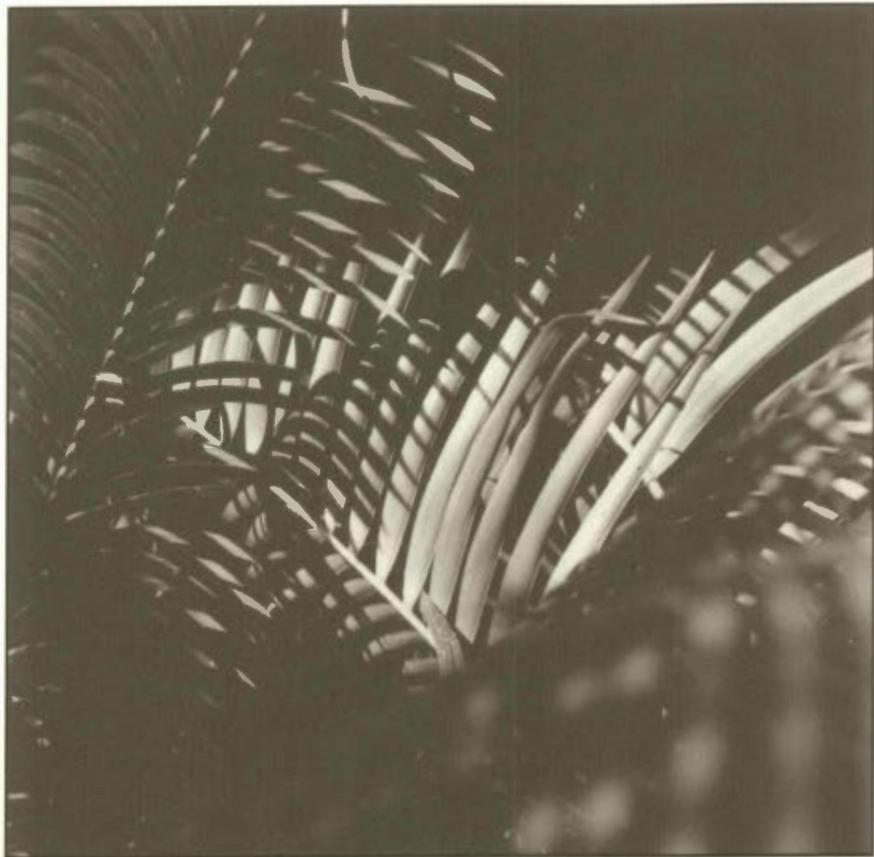


Timothy the Tintype Maker
Ashlyn Lightfoot
Digital Print

La belleza del lenguaje

By Kaylee Mulkins

To say. To say.
Say what?
What can be said
When everyone is different
They don't hear what you hear- here?
It's not how are you
It's not como va
It's not ni hao
It's all of it
It's everything
All of it
Put it in your mouth
Chew it, lick it, taste it
Feel!
All is physical
What's that in your mouth?
What is it?
The tongue, la lengua, shetou
Isn't that funny
Isn't that strange
Isn't it beautiful
Not one is the same
Split, short, or WILD
It's not something to hear, but feel
So make it like a kiss
How sweet, hermosa
Put the tongues together
And you'll know what it means



Florence
Samantha Steadman
Silver Gelatin

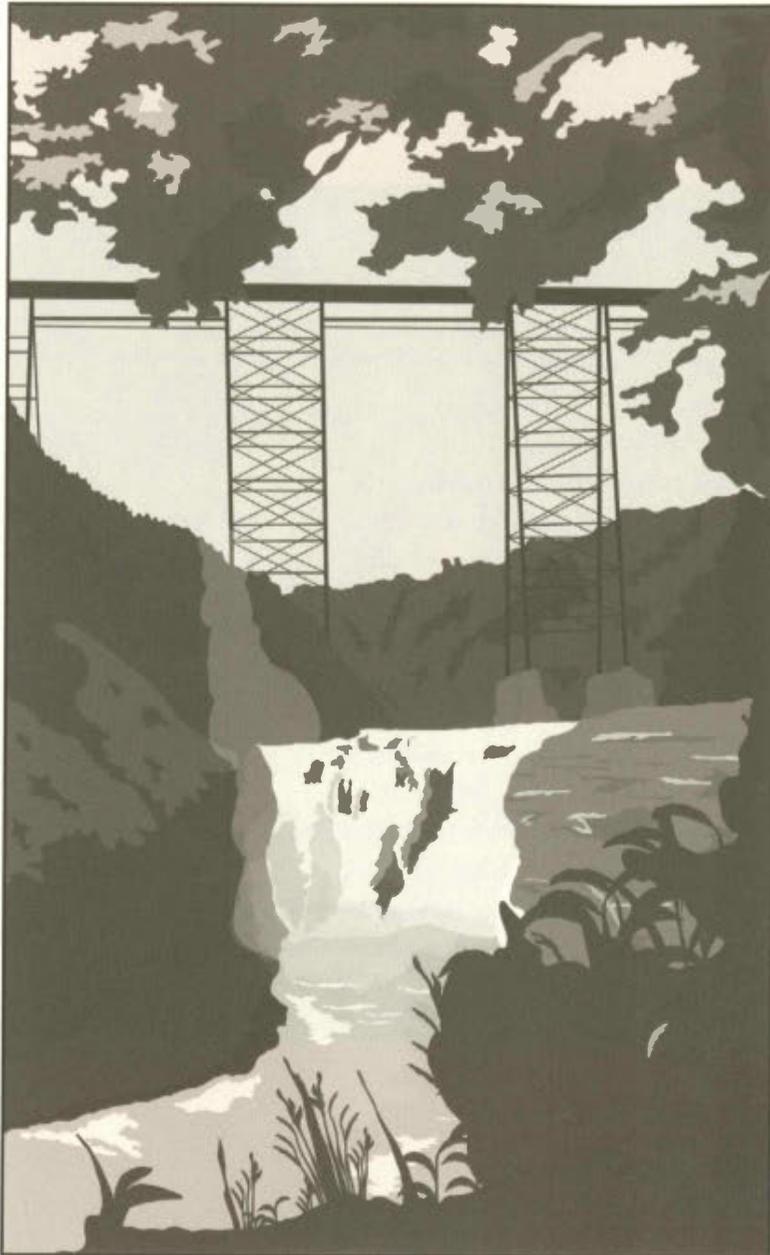
Shutdown

By Michael Nickens

When the earth turns cold,
And we come out of the comfort of old.
The cries of people for a wall,
Trump those who work through it all.
Who live check to check,
When I can't even live text to text.

If our call is to help those in need,
Why are we so scared of those who come here and bleed?
The ones who have walked miles on dirt,
With tattered clothes, and sweat on their shirts,
The ones who come with hope to contribute,
And I can't even get out of bed and press snooze.

Yelling and screaming, saying statistical lies,
Doesn't affect you, but kills others lives.
Cementing fears into the hearts of both sides
Only makes a gap, for the martyrs to die.
This is not a Soap Opera, it is the world we live in,
But I guess I'll just put on Netflix, and watch *Friends*, again.



Letchworth State Park
Janae Dawn Rangel
Illustration

El baile

By Maggie Booher

Fue un momento en que todo el tiempo termine. Solamente un momento estirado a través del tiempo y el espacio. Un momento cuando la respiración agarraba con anticipación por lo que está para venir. Las luces, los sonidos, el movimiento, cada parte es importante.

Soy del pulso del corazón de este momento. El ritmo que impulsa el movimiento. En cada nota, sonido y sentimiento de la anticipación de la audiencia— está creciendo, empezando y creando la emoción. Pasión en los silencios. En el silencio hay una presencia—su anticipación solamente se escucha. Los tresillos fluyen a través de los cuerpos en la audiencia y la bailarina. Todas las personas tenían una parte y yo tenía una parte por cada persona en ese momento.

Soy como el instrumento en este momento. ¿Pero quién es el director? Traigo la música a la vida. Los brazos representan los crescendos y mis piernas siguen las respiraciones de la audiencia, la música, sí misma. Los músculos aprietan con facilidad. Sin embargo, en realidad tengo fatiga y dolor... nadie puede saber. Yo juego a una persona y toco la música visualmente y me divierto con la audiencia, pero todas son iguales. Es como soy arcilla amoldada continuamente con fuerza y elegancia. Sigo la música o quizás me sigue. ¿Quién es el director? ¿La audiencia, la música, o yo?

Soy de la vida o pienso que doy vida en este momento porque hago la acción desde la música. Todos los ojos miran los niveles diferentes como una pincelada en una pintura acuarela donde la bailarina es los dos: el arte y la artista. También, la música es la pintura que crea la pintura acuarela. La música es la conexión entre la bailarina y su arte. Su movimiento es creado alrededor de la música y la música también parece que es creado alrededor del movimiento—y cuando se unen, son como una respiración de la bailarina. Es hermoso y natural.

Un momento, esto es todo. Un momento es todo lo necesario para que la audiencia cambie y sea transportada a otro mundo. El baile tiene la

capacidad para hacer eso. Baile evoca todos los sentidos de la audiencia—lo visual de las luces, el sonido del ritmo enérgico de la música, la elegancia del movimiento. La importancia en la bailarina y la música es que cada parte siente respecto por su propia parte y las otras partes. Esto es porque sin cada parte, no hay nada y el momento se destruye. Pero, el baile es una colección de los momentos que crean un impacto.

Alone

By Trey Rice

The cold, it seeps into my heart
Stinging my skin on my solitary march
A clink of metal in the darkness: quiet and hollow
And it sounds through the depths of my soul
Through the emptiness until it is gone
And again, I am alone

So many times I have felt water upon my face
Tasted the salt on my lips.
But tonight, the stream does not flow
For that river is damned.
Nowhere to go, no refuge to be found,
And again, I am alone.

I am with others, but they are not with me.
I stand in silence as their clamor continues
They leave one by one, each in their own way
Until I am all that is left,
And again, still... I am alone.



Small Surface, AJ Trabold, Silver Gelatin

Oil Change

By Kaylee Mulkins

"Go get me that wrench."

13, 14, or 15?

"Just bring 'em all"

And just like that I'm sixteen again.

In the driveway, running to the garage

I'm in the back, where you keep all the tools.

Everything is organized right into those red drawers.

I pull them all out looking until I find those combinations.

You loosen the bolt, because you know I can't do it.

Give me the cut up t-shirts we use for rags.

And I finish unscrewing it

I get scared about the oil splashing me in the face.

You laugh, but you tell me to move my head.

I watch it all come pouring out into the pan.

Then we wait.

Check tires. Check air filter.

Check this. Check that.

Laugh, even cuss a little

You ask me about boys and tease me.

But then you tell me to never settle.

I get a funnel and pour in that new yellowish clear oil.

Shut the hood, a loud metallic thud. It's over.

You're walking inside and I'm putting kitty litter on all the spots.

You stand in the door and look out at me.

"Hey"

Yeab

"I love ya kid."



A Tale of Two from the City
Ashlyn Lightfoot
Silver Gelatin

Embracing the “Other:” An Embodied Faith

By Sarah Colson

COLD BODIES MARCHING

I could start by telling you that more than 6 million bodies are killed for food every hour. Or I could tell you that 82% of starving children live in countries where food is fed to animals, and those animals are eaten by those of us in western countries.

But guilt is not an emotion that stays with us. Guilt does not lead to healthy change. Guilt is a fleeting feeling. And reverence lasts a lifetime.

Barbara Brown Taylor says of bodies: “When understanding finally came--not by reason but by faith--the first thing I understood was that it was not possible to trust that God loved all of me, including my body, without also trusting that God loved all bodies everywhere...While we might not have one other thing in common, we all wore skin. We all had breath and beating hearts.”

We are all bodies. Dark, pasty, hairy, bald, gangly, mangled, fat and skeletal. Cow, pig, chicken, dog, beaver, lion, child. We are all bodies.

Not everyone feels the same as me. I weep at the death of a bear. I cannot breathe when I stop to think of all the sweet-natured cows and intelligent pigs and intuitive chickens going off to the slaughter. Being separated from their young. Enduring brutality for our sloth. Drudging through the muck for our convenience. I cannot move. Because as they march through the cold mud, my mind recalls all the past and present genocides. All the cold people marching. We are all marching bodies. And I am heavily burdened.

John Muir knew that “God’s charity is broad enough for bears.” What the trailblazer didn’t mention was when we share in this charity, the responsibility we feel towards protecting those bears cuts just as deep as God’s charity is broad. And that responsibility, dear reader, was meant to be shared.

Still, I’m not one to argue. I don’t need to. See and feel for yourself. Go out into a field. Run your hands along the golden, dancing grass and find your way to the warm, sharp back of a cow. Get close to her wide,

black nose and feel her warm breath wet your own face. Look into her eyes...

Or go into the gym. Try to make your arms stronger. Pick up a weight, a 20-pound dumbbell will do, and sweat. Pump your arms full of blood and flesh up and down and up and down...

Or embrace your lover, skin on skin. Feel his skin after a hot shower transform into a smooth stone, a silken sanctuary of safety and peace...

Or reflect on the broken body of Christ. See the bruises on his sides, his legs, his back. Dare to glance at the dried blood and mud around his mouth, his hands, his feet which have marched untold miles...

Or go watch the purple, slimy, innocent body of a newborn child squirm as she comes screaming into a world so foreign, new and cruel.

"When understanding finally came--not by reason, but by faith," I realized that we are all bodies. And once I know this, once I see them all, I cannot remain unchanged. I am burdened. My body is burdened for theirs. I long, if nothing else, to march through the cold mud with them. For we are all bodies. We are different and the same.

OSMOSIS

I snuggled right up to his chin, the place where the stubble grows thick in a sporadic black patch: "I want to osmosis you."

"Osmosis me," he says, matter-of-fact. "You do know that 'osmosis' is not a verb..."

He quoted something he'd learned in a science class, something about particles or molecules going from one cell to the other. I don't hear the specifics because I'm looking at the thick stubble on his chin again. I trace a line from that chin to his eyes, the eyes that sometimes look where they shouldn't and make me blush; the eyes that are deep brown to go with his skin and so intense they'll knock you off your feet if you're not ready for them; the eyes that are often so focused on me that I at once feel alive, beautiful, and utterly terrified.

"I don't care what osmosis really means," I say sheepishly. After all, I never took a science class after my first year of college. "What I mean is that I can't possibly get close enough to you."

I say this as I squirm my way into a familiar position, my cheek on his bare chest, a position we find ourselves in every night before falling asleep. He says this is his favorite way to fall asleep, even though I

secretly know he can't sleep with someone so close and really just likes to watch me fall asleep.

I can hear his slow, healthy heart beat like the drums he plays on Sunday mornings--slow, steady, deep, true, a beat with a purpose. I hear the pulse but it's not enough. I want to melt into his chest cavity and surround myself with its vibrations, feel his warmth morph into my own until our closest friends wonder what happened to the two of us and what is this big blob of oneness that stands in our place.

I know this is odd. And I know it's rare. I never thought I would find something so precious and simultaneously concrete--to want someone so badly that you want to become one--to actually be one with another. I've never found it with anyone else. The closest I've come is with my dog, Blue, my one truest friend. Sometimes when I cuddle him and his giant snout is on my smushed cheek I can almost wish I could osmosis him. And sometimes this desire manifests itself in painful ways, like when I feel a stab in my gut at any life lost, as if that loss was my own. But this feeling, this bond, is strongest with the man with the stubble on his chin.

"You're weird," the stubble-chinned, bare-chested, warm-bodied man says, grinning. And I can't help but agree. Sometimes love makes you weird, weirder than you even were before finding someone like this.

Now, years after first confessing my own desire to morph, I catch him trying to "osmosis" me. He'll squeeze his stubbled chin tight onto my cheek--so tight it almost hurts--and whisper, "osmosis." I've even heard him whisper it to Blue a time or two.

Becoming one with the "Other" does not come without its own sense of real danger. John Muir said that "God's charity is broad enough for bears," but he didn't warn of the immense pain that God must also feel when one of those bears is lost. Great charity comes with the potential for great loss. That latent loss looms in all bodily bonds. What happens when atoms split, after all? Massive obliteration: ultimate destruction and annihilation.

But what happens when you become aware of that other body, when your gaze is fixed on the man with the stubble on his chin instead of fixed inward on potential destruction? Is the reward worth the risk? I chose to believe so. I choose to see the "Other," to snuggle right up to that atomic bomb, to be changed at the molecular level by some idea of what it means to love and be loved.

BODIES BELOVED

"Can you take me to the morgue?" I asked.

Silence. "You want to go to the morgue?"

"Yeah. I just need to see a body."

That's how I started the journey. I needed to see a dead body. As a chaplain, I had seen plenty of dead people, clothed and in beds and surrounded by loved ones. But I had never seen a dead body, really. A cold, dead body from the freezer, zipped in a giant, white Ziploc bag, a body discarded. I needed to see it simply because I had not.

I needed to take that walk down the stark white hall on the basement level of the hospital. I needed to take a right out of the very end door at the very end of the hall and take another right past the custodial headquarters. I needed to walk past the open dumpster and smell the rot of the decaying cafeteria leftovers, see the holes in the fabric of the well-used linens tossed aside.

"OK, well let me get you someone who can help with that," the woman in the blazer said.

"Can you not help with that?"

"Oh, I don't think about that stuff. It creeps me out. I don't deal with the morgue."

This was odd. Her office, after all, shared a wall with the morgue. How could she miss the detail of sitting at a desk eight hours a day, sharing the same air as the bodies next door?

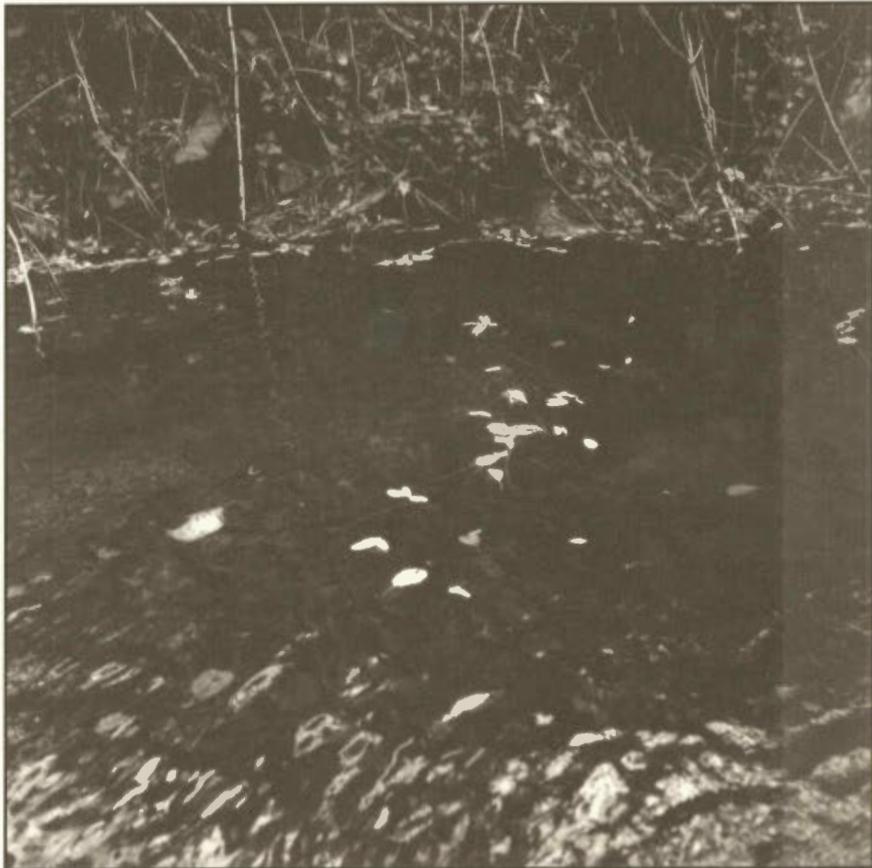
There are days I long for this kind of blindness. But I have never been able to "see the forest through the trees." I can't even see a tree. Instead, I tire my eyes tracing one small ant making its way from the base of the trunk into a pen-point hole, scurrying from patch of moss over ripples of bark. I am obsessive. I am relentless. On my best days, they call me "passionate." On my worst, I loathe my own mind.

Even as a kid, I saw the world differently. An outsider looking in might see a 7-year old, pigtailed girl flying on the tractor with her grandpappy. But stuck inside my head from that day is the memory of the limp, matted body of the baby cow I had named the spring before being drug out from underneath the feeding trough which claimed its life. I can't remember her name. But I see her dead body.

I'm the girl who's able to comfort the beloved pet on his journey to death, his eyes already too stiff to close. I'm the granddaughter of that same beef farmer, the granddaughter who went vegan. I am the body frozen in grief at the thought of thousands of cattle marching to their deaths while others order double cheeseburgers without a second thought. I am the girl who weeps at the death of a bear. I am consistently and intensely aware of the decaying bodies of the "Other," of any body we deem less-than.

When I stepped into the morgue, the floor was covered in trash. The body's mouth was open, frozen, hard. That is how we will all end up. Our bodies will one day betray us. But I'm not sure that's what bothered me. I do know that I cannot be like that office employee. I cannot sit quietly and go about my work while bodies lay alone next door. If we treat our human bodies like this, how much more basely will we treat the bodies of the "Other?"

My therapist says it's a gift. That I have a gift of prophecy. I say I am cursed, punished, damaged—that I will never be enough and I am always too much. My inability to see past... the way my mind and body constantly deny me a moment's rest, is exhausting. It's painful. But the fact remains. I cannot not care. I cannot keep silent. The fire burns too fierce. The pain cuts too sharp. I am burdened by the cries of those around me. To the innocents. The problem remains: to love myself as much as I love them. To believe as John Muir that if "God's charity is broad enough for bears," it must also be broad enough for me.



Sublime
Samantha Steadman
Silver Gelatin

What I Want

By Anna Knervosa

to die.
to have the delicious taste
of nothing travel
into my stomach and fill me
with emptiness in my mind and heart,
unavailable to anyone around me.
to focus only on self-hatred and shame, while slowly starving into a
skeleton.
my bones and my muscles and my hormones to beg me to feed them.

to stand and take a few moments stumbling in the whiteness and
distorted world of dying.
To force my decrepit, stupid, helpless body to surmount stairs or
religiously march the hills.
I want those hills to no longer shine of beauty but be a mere mean of a
punch in the calculator.
to devote my life to worship: my trinity
the Body, the Calorie, and the Holy Scale.
Am I stupid? Am I selfish? Am I vain?
All I know is that once you taste a scrumptious young death
(god forbid you actually taste, fatty)
you no longer find need sustenance.



Banana Yucca
Janae Dawn Rangel
Digital Print

Starry Night

By Trey Rice

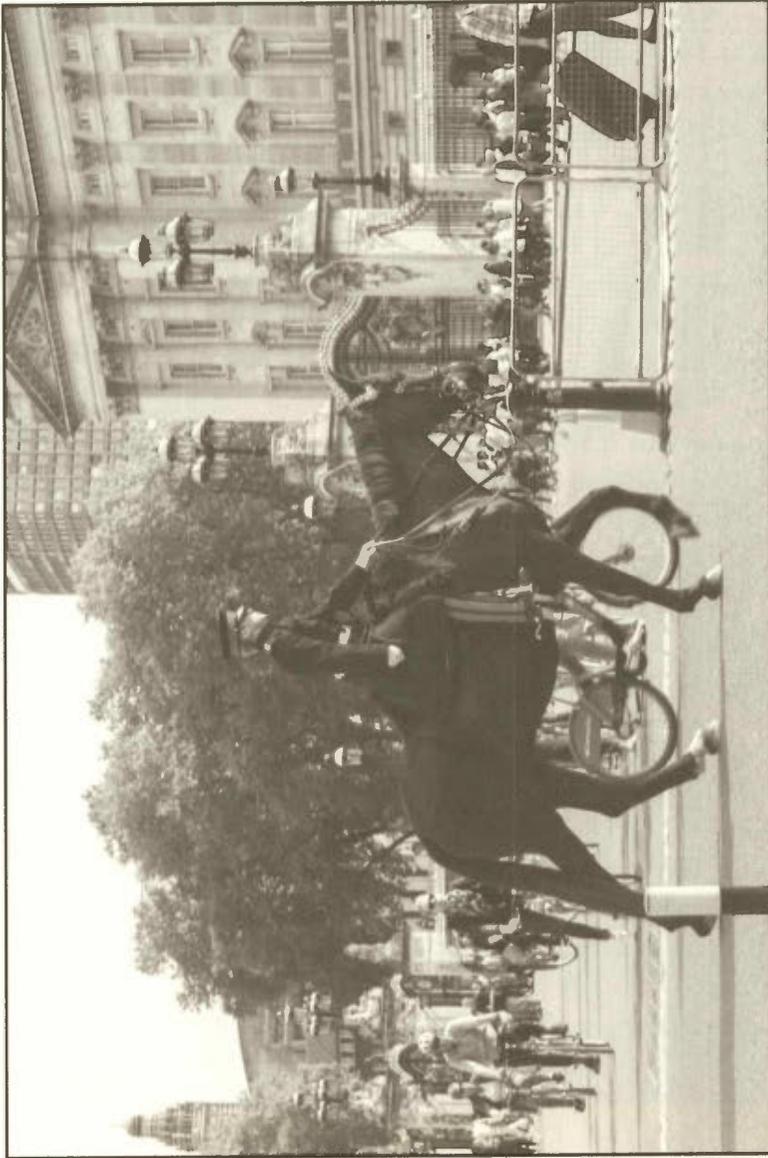
Starry night, I gaze upon thee, wishing you could fill my soul with light,
But you are so far.
Only the will'o-wisps console me this night.

Starry Night, are you distant because you know what's in my heart?
The trees know.
As I pass, they shake and rumble, grumble and mumble
The very air knows and is louder than the trees.
It summons the wind to prosecute me.

Please I cannot bear it, leave me be,
But the insistent whisper for confession turns to a howl.
The jury of trees grow louder but still refuse to accuse
The wisps are gone to the shadow.

And suddenly, I glimpse a thief in the night.
I turn to speak and defend myself
Against what? Nothing is there,
But even so, it follows me.

Now the stars are gone, even their piteous gaze has its limits.
Starry Night, why have you forsaken me?
For a sky filled with clouds only brings dread till lifted
And lo! They stir away! Unveiling the dreaded, all revealing light
of judgment
"My friends, comfort me," I cry



A Decisive Moment at Buckingham Palace, Amy Shumaker, Digital Print

Las mujeres hispanohablantes en la política de los EE.UU.

By Ellie Cachiaras

La composición de los Estados Unidos siempre está cambiando. En años recientes, los grupos de minorías étnicas han crecido mucho. Miembros de estos grupos son importantes, pero hay muchas desventajas injustas para ellos en varios aspectos de la cultura americana. Uno de estos grupos es la población hispanohablante. Un 18,1 por ciento de la población de los EE.UU. son latinxs. Es el grupo de minoría étnica más grande en el país (U.S. Census Bureau). Latinas, las mujeres de este grupo, son una de las poblaciones con el crecimiento más rápida en los EE.UU. (LatinasRepresent). Irónicamente, estas mujeres no son representadas bien en el gobierno o en la política del país. Hay una desigualdad y hay desventajas muy grandes para estas mujeres.

Desafortunadamente, ahora mismo estas mujeres no tienen muchas voces en el gobierno o en la política del país. Hay una gran necesidad para una democracia que refleja su población, pero ahora la realidad es un grupo muy desequilibrado. Hay 435 escaños en la Cámara de Representantes y 79 son mujeres y solo nueve son mujeres hispanohablantes. Hay un problema grande con esta tergiversación de latinas en el gobierno. Solo representan un 1,6 por ciento del congreso y un 1,3 por ciento de legisladores estatales (LatinasRepresent). Los cuerpos legislativos de los EE.UU. no reflejan la diversidad de los ciudadanos fielmente. ¿Por qué hay diferencias tan dramáticas por este grupo de personas?

Los papeles de género afectan a mujeres en todo el mundo, pero en los EE.UU., el impacto es más fuerte para mujeres latinas a menudo (Shames). Las mujeres latinas están desalentadas de postularse por oficinas o papeles políticos o poderosos. Esto ocurre en maneras formales e informales. Hay una falta de apoyo organizado para estas mujeres cuando están tratando de hacer cosas políticas y este hecho solo es un gran obstáculo. No hay una organización nacional que enfoca exclusivamente en mejorar la representación política de Latinas en los EE.UU. y es aún más complicado para mujeres hispanohablantes que son candidatas republicanas (Shames). Sin apoyo o conexiones fuertes, es

muy difícil para hacer progreso en el mundo la política; estos papeles son casi inalcanzables para estas mujeres.

Además de la falta de apoyo, a veces hay resistencia injusta e innecesaria. Catalina Torres es una mexicana-americana nacido en Boston y ha hecho muchas cosas para mejorar la comunidad allí. Relata una historia cuando estaba desarrollando un proyecto económico en Boston, pero cuando se puso en contacto con directores de agencias pidiendo apoyo, recibió muchas críticas y quejas. Dijeron que ella necesitaba ponerse en contacto antes de comenzar el proyecto, sugiriendo que ella no tenía las habilidades necesarias o una buena visión (Hardy-Fanta). Su situación es la narrativa común para estas mujeres en este campo de trabajo, pero esta situación sería muy rara para un hombre. El cuento de Catalina demuestra la acción de hombres tratando de dificultar el progreso y los proyectos dirigido por mujeres.

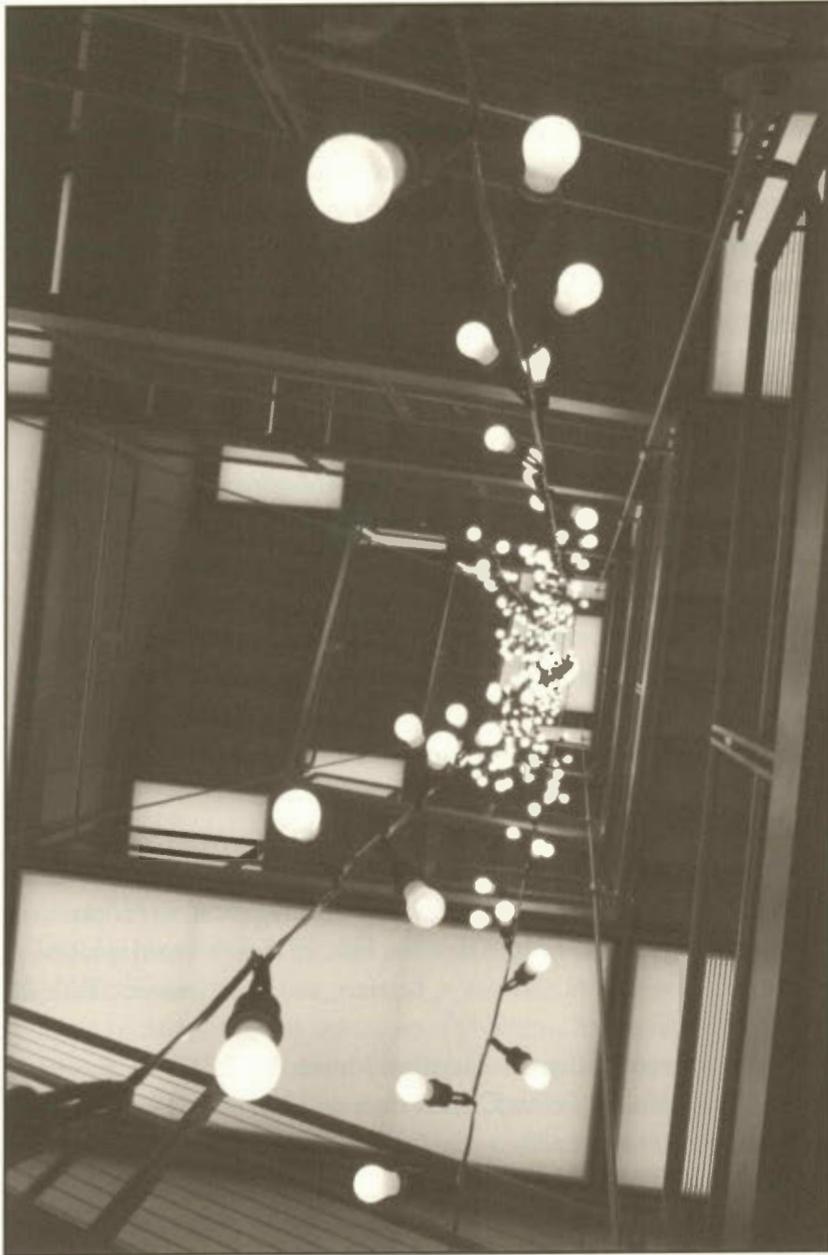
En una vía más informal y menos visible, mujeres han sido limitadas por la cultura. Tradicionalmente, mujeres latinas eran consideradas débiles, sumisas o pasivas especialmente en una cultura dominada por hombres. Este constructo ha restringido su posibilidad o probabilidad de ser líderes políticos (Hardy-Fanta). Esta actitud se ha grabado en comportamiento común y la forma de vida de muchas personas. Contribuye a los sentimientos negativos hacia mujeres en posiciones del poder e influencia. Hay otros factores que afectan a mujeres hispanohablantes en sus intereses en el campo político como el aislamiento en la oficina, entrenamiento deficiente, una escasez de mentores buenas y las dificultades de la recaudación de fondos (LatinasRepresent).

Al no incluir a mujeres latinas en el gobierno, hay agujeros grandes. Muchas veces, estas mujeres son catalizadores por cambio político y pueden tomar la iniciativa en movilizar a familias y comunidades (Bejarano). El gobierno de los EE.UU. necesita sus voces y opiniones. En comparación con hombres, mujeres latinas pueden enfocar en las relaciones interpersonales y esta capacidad es muy única y necesitada (Hardy-Fanta). Aunque estas mujeres deben tratar con problemas y barreras que crucen género y raza, están ganando más autoridad de política y de votar y han hecho medidas muy impresionantes en años recientes. En el pasado, muchas personas pensaban que mujeres hispanohablantes encontrarían dificultades dobles, pero ahora parece que

latinas pueden atraer una votación más diversa que hombres latinos. Esto es porque pueden atraer a mujeres de clases y grupos étnicos diferentes y también hombres de minorías étnicas (Bejarano). En conclusión, este grupo de mujeres tiene la potencial para hacer cosas increíbles y poderosas. A pesar de que son maltratadas y desventajadas, muchas veces, son defensores para cambios buenos y justos. Todavía hay muchas preguntas sobre este tema de tergiversación, pero hay evidencia que sugiere el futuro de la política del EE.UU. pueda ser mejor y más equitativo.

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Unwinding Staircase
Janae Dawn Rangel
Digital Print

Good News

By Kaylee Mulkins

Tell me who you are
On those skinny, frail pages.
Words go from **black** to **red**,
And you never say what you mean.
But this is where they say to find you
This is your love written down
Your life lived out
And I've read it all
You knew
Knew it was hard
To love from afar
You knew about the blood
About the breaking
To love someone so terrible
Someone like me
I'll never understand



Aimes Cathedral, Amy Shumaker, Digital Print

Worthless

By Gloria Vazquez

My education does not matter to you
The years I suffered were not enough
You think you know what love means

Well-being

But all I hear is the hate that you spit out
Between those lips that were meant for more

You think you know it all
How many years do you have above me
But you don't think I know things, too?

Is it because I am a woman
And you are a man

Or is it because you are the authority, now
Corrupted by your desires and thoughts?

You focus on the material
Nothing is enough for you, is it?

Abandoning one child was not enough for you
The way you strike them when they confessed their sin to you

To turn your heart as cold as the third wife you married
Not realizing that it was cold before your first marriage
That small flame of love was not enough, was it?

Only caring about the gifts you receive from yourself
Never focusing on the abundance of gifts that the Creator gives to you
Never taking the time to listen to the person
Who cares about your well-being, too

I'm not worth anything
I'm not worth it to focus on myself
I'm not worth it to spend time on myself
I'm not worth it to let my knowledge grow
I'm not worth it to being listened
I'm not worth it to finally let go
I'm worthless to you

But at least to someone out there
I'm enough
I'm enough to have the smallest amount of happiness
I'm enough to have the freedom of letting my mind wander
I'm enough to be listened
And that's love

At least, that's what I think it might be
But I don't have all the answers
And you don't have them, too

I just wish that
You'd listen to me.
And I wished that
I'd listen to you, too.

Today is March 8th
The day I wrote this
Tomorrow is March 9th
The day I turn one year older

Happy birthday to me, I guess
One more year
We, at least get to share together
One more year
Until our final rest

And I guess
That can be love, too.

Let Her Be / Words from a Tired Feminist

By Erin Isely

If you know a woman,
let her be.

Let her be
fierce as an eagle, loud
and free.
Let her be
gentle as a wren, quiet
and reserved.

Let her be
a diamond, rough, hard,
and solid as the earth.
Let her be
a pearl, layered, soft,
and fluid as the sea.

Let her be both
and neither.
Everything
and nothing.

She can be anything she wants
if you let her.
She can be anything she wants
whether you let her or not.

Undercover

By Kassi Butcher

It was as a normal of a day as it could be. Violet stood in the kitchen of her perfectly architected home, in her high-toned neighborhood, where she lived with her husband and two-year-old son. Her husband was the chief of neurosurgery at the local hospital, and Violet spent her days trying to keep busy with whatever task she could find for herself. She would redecorate, plant flowers, cook extravagant meals, and be as normal as she could be.

MAINTAIN A NORMAL, AND UNDER THE RADAR LIFESTYLE.

Violet poured herself a cup of coffee and entered the living room where Mason sat playing with some of his toys. Her son, Mason, was the center of her world.

Her husband, Conrad, came down the stairs dressed in his normal suit that he wore to the hospital every morning.

"Violet, some of my work shirts are wrinkled, will you iron them at some point today?" Conrad asked as he adjusted his tie in the mirror. Violet sat on the couch with Mason sitting next to her on the floor, she looked up to Conrad and gave him a soft smile.

"Of course, dear," she responded. Conrad didn't respond as he went into the kitchen to pour himself a cup of coffee.

"I'll be home by seven," he told her as he re-entered the foyer to head out the front door.

"I'll have dinner ready," Violet responded. Conrad opened the front door and closed it, without noticing Violet's response.

EMBRACE THE DEVOTED ROLE OF A DOMESTIC HOUSEWIFE.

Violet rolled her eyes as she watched Conrad's car pull out of their driveway. She wished she could just get rid of him, that it just be her and Mason. *You know how to get rid of him*, she thought to herself. In her mind she had flashbacks of the woman she used to be, and it made her cringe.

It was a Wednesday, and Wednesday's were when Violet would go to the grocery store. She loaded Mason in his car seat and drove through their picture-perfect neighborhood. Violet made sure to smile and wave at any neighbor she saw, putting on the perfect façade of a friendly, normal woman.

At the store, Violet got out her perfectly written grocery list and diligently scoped through the aisles to find what she needed. The last item on her list were white daisies from the floral kiosk. Mason sat quietly and unbothered in his grocery cart seat. Violet couldn't help but be enamored by her sweet child.

Violet got Mason back into the car along with the groceries, and took an hour drive out of town to a cemetery in a small town. She let Mason out to run around and she took the white daisies that she had just purchased to one of the headstones. Violet placed the daisies in front of the head stone and stood there looking at the stone. The stone read:

M. E. M.

MARCH 13, 1992 – JULY 21, 2015

Violet looked at the stone a little bit longer, the tears and sadness that she had once felt, were no longer present.

MOVE ON, BUT NEVER FORGET.

Mason fell asleep in the car on the drive back to their house. Violet quickly drove down the winding roads to get home. She wanted to get Mason into his bed and the groceries into the refrigerator. The possibility of spoiled groceries was the most stressful thing that Violet had encountered in a while.

She arrived home and quickly put Mason in his bed, and the groceries away. She rolled her eyes and she placed the last of the groceries up, realizing her life used to involve more thrills and excitement than this.

The mundane life that she had agreed to. It was safe, the most stressful part of her day was trying to decide if she should cook chicken, or fish for dinner. She finished putting the groceries away and walked over to her office. She rarely used the room, as it was more just for show. There was a sewing machine in the corner that Violet had no idea how to use, she had paint samples lying on a side table, and magazines stacked high with all of the tips on how to "improve your home". She sat down behind her massive desk that she never used. In the bottom right

drawer however, she had it locked with a code that only she knew. Violet punched in the code and the drawer unlocked. She hesitantly pulled it open where a lock box sat. Violet punched in another code to open the lock box. In it sat a small revolver that she had not set eyes on in years.

LET GO OF EVERYTHING THAT CONNECTS YOU TO IT.

She picked the revolver up and steadied it in her hand. The feeling of it sent chills down her body, she had forgotten the sensation that she felt when she used a gun.

The doorbell interrupted her nostalgia as she frantically shoved the revolver back into the lock box, closing it and the drawer. She stood up, smoothed out her outfit and attempted to muster a "happy wife" smile across her face. Violet opened the door to find two men dressed in black suits standing on the front porch. *Agents*, she assumed.

"Good afternoon Mrs. Collier, my name is Agent Jones, and this is my partner Agent Frank," the tall dark-skinned man began. Violet felt out of practice. She hadn't had to talk to agents in years.

"How may I help you?" she politely asked, keeping her composure. The agents looked around then both grabbed their badges from their coat pockets.

"Caroline Schmidt," Agent Jones said quietly and calmly. Violet recognized their badges and realized they were from the same agency that she had been in.

"Come in," Violet briskly said as she opened the door wider for them to walk in. Agent Jones, and Agent Frank walked into the foyer, Violet closed the door behind them.

"How can I help you?" Violet asked, her mindset had changed in the last two minutes completely. She had gone from being a happy, go lucky woman, to a serious, all business woman.

"It's Travis Archibald, or better known as Mason Edward Markakis," Agent Frank explained. Violet kept calm on the outside, but on the inside, she felt herself die a little at the sound of his name. Agent Frank took a folder out of his jacket and opened it up. Violet could feel her mouth go dry, as it was a picture of Travis on a security camera, the date of the photo was two days ago, July 19th.

Violet took the picture into her shaking hands, she could no longer hold her composure together.

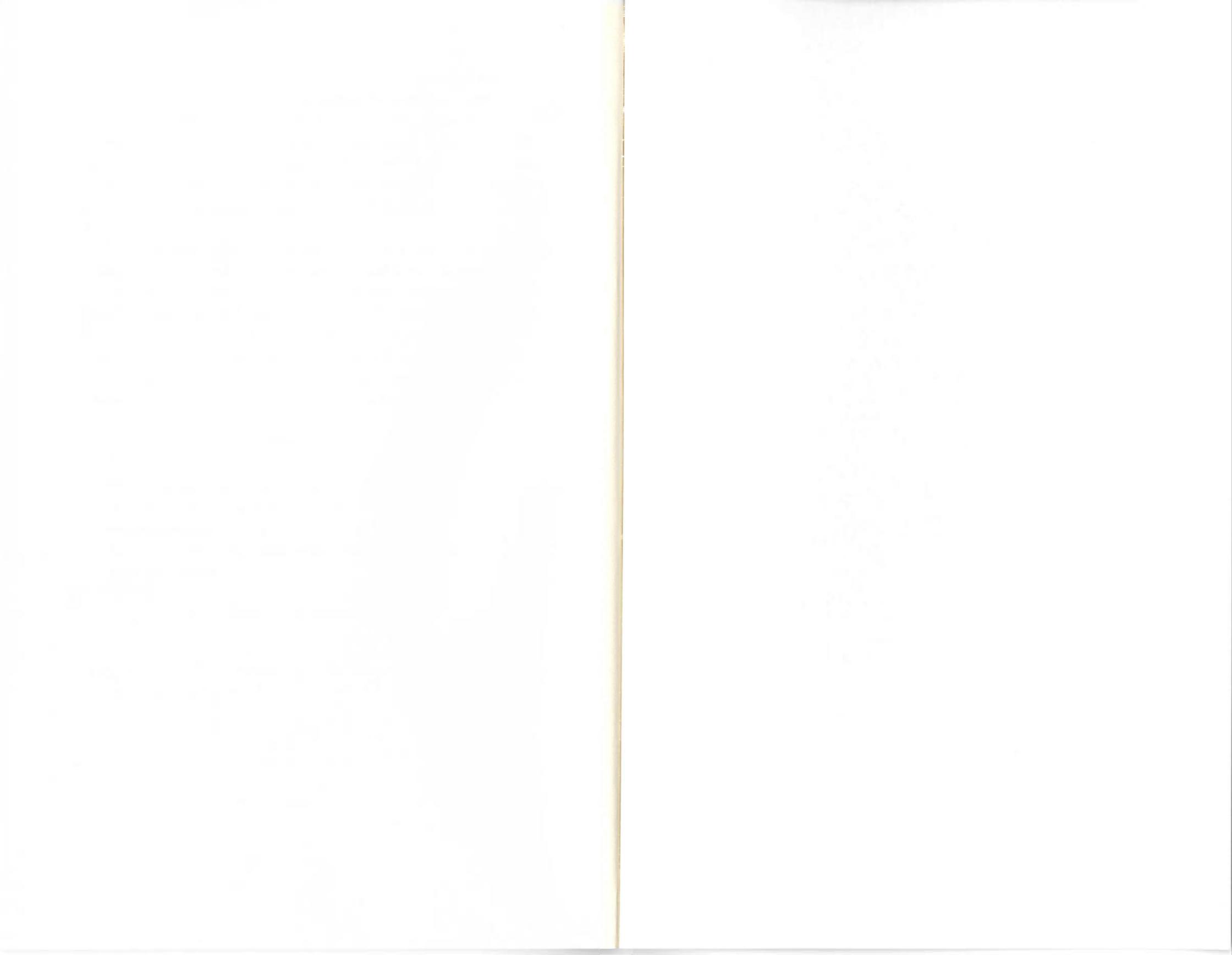
"This can't be possible, I watched Mason die," she said to the agents. I should know, I am the one who shot him, she thought to herself.

"Well we have reason to believe that he is alive and on the move. We believe you could be one of his targets," Agent Jones explained. Violet continued to tremble as she thought back to when she killed him. She remembered his body lying on the floor, motionless, blood coming from his chest. If Mason Markakis was alive, Violet knew she needed to be on the move.

Suddenly there was a loud shrilling noise from the upstairs bedroom, where her son Mason had been sleeping. Violet bolted up the stairs, Agent Jones, and Frank behind her. She entered into Mason's room to find him lying in his bed, but the windows to his room were opened. The agents pulled out their guns, and Violet rushed over to Mason. She pulled him up into her arms and looked around the room. Pinned against the cork board on the wall was a piece of paper that had not been there. Violet swiftly snatched the piece of paper and began to read it.

In the ground I won't be found
To you I am no longer bound
You broke my heart with your gun
But my name lives on with your son
Violet has a nice a ring to it
However, I will always remember you as Caroline Schmidt.
Love you forever,
MEM

SURVIVE AS BEST AS CAN BE.



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