



EVERYTHING FOR
EVERYONE

NOTHING FOR
OURSELVES

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Albert Cama's house (which was really his parent's house) was a small two-bedroom bungalow strangely situated in that its front door faced exactly the corner of Carnation Street and Bay Street. So when anyone sent a letter to the Cama's, the front of the envelope was always addressed *Carnation and Bay Street, San Antonio, Texas, 78226*. As an added oddity—and because the Cama's house was strangely set farther back from its neighbors—anytime one of the family came out, they were greeted with a view of their neighbor's backyard instead of front lawns and driveways. This weird set-up was especially frustrating for Albert since, whenever he stepped out the front door and onto the porch, he could never clearly see what was on his right or his left—only the backyards and only the street directly in front of him.

Behind the Cama's house was a small wood which let out to a fenced-in auto junkyard that Albert sometimes broke into. He'd sit on the stacked heaps of rusted Fords and Dodges, smoking a joint by himself, thinking about pussy. Just past the junkyard, on the other side of a two-lane road, was Kelly Air Force Base.

A couple weeks ago a makeshift camp had been set up for the people of hurricane Katrina. When they first arrived, Albert climbed onto the junked cars and watched volunteers guide in the long busses that brought them. For days, he would wake up and watch the people from New Orleans, all black, amble around in the Texas sun, shielding their eyes from the brightness and holding onto their children—

little girls and boys in oversized clothes—close to their hips or by the hand. Men and women, old and young, milled around the fenced in field, and sometimes they sat under umbrellas and erected tarps before retreating into the tents for the night. Albert had watched one day a few of the old ladies from the varrio, in their faded aprons and shirt-dresses, shuffle to the fence carrying aluminum containers of food, foolishly trying to pass meals over the fence to the volunteers but failing because they were too short and too old. For several days he watched the people from New Orleans, but soon he became bored with them and now didn't care what they were up to, forgetting about them altogether.

In the morning, Albert woke up at 9:30. Freshly washed, in his creased shorts and hooded sweatshirt, he sat on the front step of his porch and lit a roach that he chose from a lump of roaches and half-joints he kept hidden in an empty molé jar behind his stereo. It was late September and unseasonably cold even for the morning. The sky was a stone gray; dark heavy clouds crowded up on each other like soiled laundry. Most of the people in the tiny varrio were already off at work, leaving only the old people and the handicapped people and the unemployed people to do whatever in the quietness of the near empty neighborhood.

Albert was seventeen. He was tall and thin to the point of almost gaunt, and he wore oversized clothing to give the illusion that he was larger—stronger—than he actually was. He had been promising his parents for months that he

would get his GED and join the Army, but mostly he just hung around with his friends drinking beer and getting high at Kennedy Park. Sitting on the porch, Albert watched the clouds gather. He caught the loamy smell of rain and thought he might have to go inside if it pours down too strong. But for now he decided he would smoke his marijuana in the chilly breeze and wait for something interesting to come find him. Finally, something recognizable came into view from the house across the street. Mano was a short man, dark and mustachioed and known around the varrio as many things: a laborer, a mechanic, a drunk, a thief, a heroin abuser. He was a quiet guy who sometimes played catch-football with the younger kids. Mostly, though, he just shuffled around the neighborhood mowing the lawns of old men and women, washing their cars for five or ten bucks—whatever he could get. And whenever he was done with his job, he'd jump on his mountain bike with only one working gear and ride to the Stop-n-Go at the corner for some beer. On hot days, Mano would ride to the store with his shirt draped over his shoulder, exposing his worn body and sloppy tattoos. His quarts of Busch beer would clink like tiny bells inside the plastic bag which hung off the handlebars. Though he was already forty-two, he was unmarried and lived with his diabetic mother.

Albert watched Mano step out of his mother's house and into the front yard, which was nothing more than a sad patch of bad soil and Texas wrightwort. In his hand, he had a small coffee can. In the other, a rusty

trowel. Albert watched Mano get on his hands and knees and scoop up some of the dirt with his trowel, bringing it closely to his bagged eyes as if to inspect every grain of earth. Mano shook the dirt from the blade. He slouched his shoulders and continued pacing around his front yard, kicking at the dirt with his shabby tennis shoes.

"Oralé, Mano," yelled Albert, waving at him.

Mano stopped what he was doing, looked at the young man then went back inside the house. He did not wave back or smile or even cock his head to say "what's up." He just looked at Albert and went back into the house and closed the door.

"Who you waving at, Caca?" asked George. He was walking his mountain bike between the two houses and up to Albert's fence. George was a fat, nineteen-years-old, and he lived a few streets down from Albert with his mother and her boyfriend. He refused to call Albert by his given name even in front of Albert's parents. Instead, George called him Caca with the same ease and nonchalance you'd address your girlfriend or a cousin.

"Mano was just outside."

"I dunno why you talk to that dude," said George, coming into the yard. "I heard he's got AIDS and shit."

Albert had heard that too and shrugged his shoulders and passed his roach to George who licked the tips of his fingers just before taking it. Sounds of wind chimes tinkled in the air and the two smoked what was left of the marijuana roach. Albert went back inside and pulled another small joint from the molé jar and the two boys smoked that too. The sky got a bit darker as the

clouds became heavier and meaner and closer to the ground. The wind also picked up and blew some of the trashcans into the street. A few houses down, an old woman came lumbering out to chase her garbage can. It was an old tin can, and it made a loud racket as it scraped and toppled down the asphalt. Albert and George chased the can down and brought it back to the old woman and put it inside her garage. The old woman in the apron thanked them. The two boys, feeling they had done something good for the day, rewarded themselves with another roach from Albert's jar.

George puffed at the marijuana cigarette. "Why you up so early?"

"I was gonna go and take my GED test."

"But?"

"No bus fare."

"Oh," said George.

"Why you up so early?"

"I came over to meet with Eugeño and his dad."

Eugeño was Albert's next door neighbor to the left. He lived with his father Hernando. Eugeño was the same age as Albert and was from Mexico just like his dad. He was a quiet young man who only spoke Spanish. He and his father worked digging ditches for a septic company in Boerne, Texas. But times were slow and people were not building houses out in the country as much, so some weeks they did not work digging holes.

"You gonna dig shit holes with them?"

"Chalé, Caca" said George. He threw his hands in the air as if to shoo away the accusation. "Eugeño and his dad are picking up a pig from a friend that has a

farm. The farmer told them they could have the pig if they'll come pick it up."

Albert took a big drag from the roach and coughed and passed it to George. He thought about the reasons why someone might want with a pig in their yard and tried to run every possible scenario in his head so that he did not sound stupid asking his next question.

"What's he want with a pig?"

"Pa comer, Caca, what else?"

Albert shrugged and picked at the paint that had begun to chip away from the porch floor. He felt embarrassed that he did not know what George and Eugeño and Hernando were going to do with the pig, and so he didn't say anything for a few minutes.

"Well what do they want you for?"

"They said I could help. Plus, I wanna see them kill it."

"Kill it?"

"Yeah," said George.

"Here?"

"Simón, Caca. Where else? Hernando said if I help, they'll give me some of the meat to take home."

"They're gonna cut it up here?" asked Albert horrified.

George laughed at Albert and asked him what time it was. Albert said he did not know and went into the house and yelled from inside that it was 10:30. When he came back out, he found George standing and staring across the street at Mano.

"What is that dude doing over there?"

Mano was out again with his coffee can and trowel. This time he was in another part of the yard picking at the earth and holding it up close to his eyes. He put the tin can down and took some of the dirt in his palm and examined it. Then he

scooped up some of the soil with his trowel and took it with him.

George giggled at him and held his hand up to his mouth as he did. Albert didn't say anything. He thought what Mano was doing was strange, but he was drawn to his hustles and liked that the man cut corners to get his. The kind of guy that said "chingate" to the system and didn't give a fuck who knew, a cruel rebel—a kind of tecato César Chávez.

"Oralé, Mano," yelled Albert.

"Don't call that dude over here, Caca."

Mano looked at the two boys then went back inside and closed the door behind him.

"What's his problem?" said Albert.

"Who cares. That dude's crazy."

Albert thought to defend Mano but instead took the joint back from his friend. A loud engine rumbled down the street. Eventually, Eugeño and Hernando came growling into view in Hernando's rust-patched Chevy Silverado. At the wheel was a dark man with a bushy mustache and small dark eyes. He had on a button shirt tucked into a pair of dirty Wrangler jeans and some cowboy boots. Together, Hernando and Eugeño walked to the back of the truck and pulled the tailgate down and reached in and lugged out a pig in a wire cage. Albert and George got up from the porch and walked over. The two helped Eugeño and Hernando pull the cage from bed. Then the four of them grabbed the cage by the wood bottom and carefully set it down on the ground. All the while, the animal screeched and howled and shook the pen. The four of

them stood for a moment and caught their breath.

"I've never seen a pig before up close," said Albert.

Eugeño's dad smiled.

George tapped the cage lightly with his foot. "I've seen pig's feet at the store. And even the head in a bag."

"Sí," said Eugeño. He wiped sweat from his face with his sleeve.

"Mi friend says I can have. But to peek up," said Hernando, motioning with his small hands.

Albert nodded.

The pig squealed and banged its spotted body against the cage, and Albert jumped back from the pen. The others laughed.

"It's in a cage, Caca. It can't get you."

"Ta enojado," said Eugeño, tapping the wire with his boot.

"Yes," said Hernando, "he es berry angry."

The loud shrieks from the pig made Albert want to put his hands over his ears. The four of them waited for the pig to stop crying. When it finally calmed down, Eugeño's dad pulled the beast by its front legs from the cage and kept it from thrashing by putting his body on top of it. Albert and George tried to hold its hind legs. Albert turned his head away and felt sick from the tickling soft hair that sprouted from the pig's body. It felt too much like human hair. Eugeño took a long rope from the truck and swiftly tied a lead around the pig's neck. When it was secure, Hernando told the boys to let go. Still holding the animal, he took the rope from Eugeño and wrapped it tight around his arm. When he felt the rope was firm, he raised himself off the pig's back. The animal shot off like a rocket, stumbling and falling over and

screeching. Hernando pulled back on the rope and used his body to anchor the animal. Soon he had control of the thing and guided it to the backyard and tied it to a stake. Out of the corner of his eye, Albert saw Mano come out his house wearing a trash bag poncho over a heavy green coat. He had his bike with him and tied to his handlebars was a long stick like a cut broom handle. Mano jumped onto his bike, peddling away under the clouded sky. Albert waved. George slapped Albert on the chest. Hernando and Eugene went inside their house and told the boys they'd be out in a short while with a knife and a bucket of hot water. Albert and George said okay and that they'd be on their porch waiting.

Sitting on the porch, Albert and George drank R.C. Cola. George pulled out a cigarette from a backpack he had hitched to his mountain bike and the two of them shared it. A cool breeze came through again. A low crack of thunder tumbled softly through the sky, and Albert felt it in his body. Later, he brought out two more cans of soda, and he and George drank them and then smoked another Kool cigarette.

"Mano's back," said Albert.

George did not answer because he was too busy watching Eugene keep the pig quiet by feeding it some corn he got out from the truck. "I wonder what his new hustle is."

"I don't care," said George.

Albert walked to the edge of his front gate. Mano was out in the yard again. He was bent down, sitting on his heels, looking at the dirt. He rubbed it in between his fingers and then threw the soil into the air.

"He's looking at the dirt again."

"I smell like pig now," said George.

By now Mano had walked back into his small house and closed the door behind him.

"What's he doing?"

"Do you think I smell like pig?"

"Maybe he's getting ready to bury something. Maybe his mom died and he's gonna bury her right in the front yard." Thoughts of old ladies in black dresses paying their respects to a grainy lump in the front yard flickered in Albert's head and it all seemed bright and possible to him. Sitting back down on the porch he laughed out loud.

"I'm gonna go change, Caca. I smell like pig." George walked away.

Albert, never taking his eyes off Mano's house, hardly noticed. When he came out again, Albert watched him with his trash bag poncho and tethered stick speed away on his bike like some horseback hero—a Chicano Lancelot, he thought. Albert waved, but Mano didn't even look back.

Then, all was quiet.

Albert sat up and listened closely to the thunder that boomed far off. He could already hear in his head the rain that had not come yet. He got another roach and smoked it outside on the porch steps. He enjoyed the stiff wind that came and went, whipping around him like a school of fish. He thought to hang out in the junkyard wood and watch the angry sky. But he did not want to look back at the airfield and all the poor souls from New Orleans who lived in tents and used portable bathrooms and had to walk to fast-food joints just to get their

breakfast and dinner. He remembered how one day he rode with his mother on some errands. He saw them walking up and down the street, carrying bags of fast food and toilet paper and soap. And when his mother offered an old black woman and her granddaughter a ride to the grocery, he did not talk to them. He saw in the old black woman's eyes a drooping helplessness. He was scared, and the woman reminded him of how rudderless he was. He remembered looking away from her, ashamed that he should compare himself to her. He wished his mother had not stopped for the old woman and began to feel a growing terribleness in himself that he would have rather had her walk then to face those eyes. He was not sure what to say. He was afraid that he might offer something to remind them and himself of the heartache they were all in. As if they needed *him* to remind them.

It was past noon now, and the sky grew darker. Albert watched the pig eat, amazed that it never did look up from its food. It just kept on pushing through the scraps. And every time the beast got near to being done—every time it came close to the cool and hard earth beneath the corn—along came Eugene with more feed. And Albert did feel sorry for the animal. That it could not know that its grim slaughter was as close and as sure and as mean as the clouds that gathered just above them both. Albert heard a bike approaching and stood up. But it was only George. He saw he still had the same clothes on.

"I thought you went to change?"

"I did. But then I thought what for if I'm gonna be around that pig still. I didn't want to stink up new clothes."

"Yeah," said Albert.

From around the corner, just into his sight, Mano returned. He could see that Mano's trash bag poncho had been ripped. The man walked his bike back into his yard.

"Don't call him over here. I'm serious, Caca."

"It's just Mano."

"If you do, I'm going over with Eugeño and his dad."

"Well forget you then," said Albert. "More weed for me." Albert whistled at Mano and threw his arms up. "Oralé, Mano."

Mano paused and looked around like a paranoid alley cat. George rested his bike against Albert's porch and walked next door without saying anything to Albert. Albert walked across the street and rested his body against Mano's gate and greeted the man with a hand which Mano took with some pause. The two spoke quietly of the neighborhood. Mano said he had run off some black kids strolling around just the other night, he spoke of how they needed to stay on the air base.

"I didn't see them," said Albert, "What's up with the coffee can?"

"Don't worry about it, little homie," said Mano with some nervousness. "It's just a little side project I got going."

Staring at his face, Albert noticed Mano's eyes were red and glassy and the left side of his face seemed pink and agitated. There was also a fresh scratch on his neck like something horrible had tried to pull the skin away. It was then that Albert noticed Mano had the stick in his hand

and that it was broken and splintered.

"Like a new hustle?" asked Albert.

"Yeah, like a new business I got running."

"You need any help?"

Mano seemed more nervous now. He looked around as if waiting for someone to come get him. He threw the stick in the yard, and picked some of the dirt from his pinky nail and then bit off the cuticle from his thumb and spit it out.

"Nah. Just go home. I'll catch up with you later."

Albert tried to answer back but Mano stopped him. Albert dropped his shoulders, and his thin body looked like the air had been swept out.

"I just figured you could use another guy. You know, for your new your hustle."

Mano stepped away from the fence and went back to his front door. His trash bag made a funny noise as he walked. Albert pushed himself off from the fence and waited for a car to pass. He started across the street.

"Okay, little homie," Mano said. He walked back to the fence and threw his arms, like snakes, over the top rail. "You wanna make some easy money?"

"Yeah," said Albert with a grin. He came back and undid the fork latch on the gate and let himself into the yard. Mano stopped him.

"You gotta be cool though. You gotta follow all my instructions. Meet me here in five minutes with a bicycle."

Albert nodded and the two shook hands. He smiled the short walk back across the street to his house and found George sharpening a wood-handled

butcher knife on a block of flint. The blade kissed and slid down the flint, irritating Albert's ears.

"What you doing?" asked Albert.

"What's it look like I'm doing? I'm sharpening this knife."

"What for?"

"To kill the pig, Caca, what else?"

Albert looked over into Hernando's yard. He saw the father and son lift a large plywood plank and place it on top of an old unpainted picnic table. They secured it with thick twine. There was a tin bucket by their feet. Next to that, the pig ate.

"Why you sharpening it over here for?" said Albert. The scraping seemed to get louder.

"Smoke me out another joint."

"No way, man," said Albert.

"Why not?" said George.

"Let me use your bike."

George scoffed at Albert. "'Tas loco. It's my mom's boyfriend's bike. He'd kick my ass if anything happened to it." He went on sharpening the knife, keeping his eyes to the task.

"I'll pass you a joint," said Albert.

"Two joints," demanded George.

Albert agreed. He went inside and used the old roaches to roll two whole new joints. Albert took the bike from the porch and walked over to Mano's.

By now the sky had almost turned black. The outside seemed dull and stunted under the heavy cover. The smell of rain seemed so close that Albert could almost taste the moisture—primitive and

earthy—in his mouth. The bottomless roar of thunder came. It was louder now, more often. Mano came out. He had on a new trash bag poncho. He patted his pockets then picked his bike up from the ground. This time, he fastened a metal pipe instead of a broom handle to his handlebars with electrical cord.

“What’s the stick for?” said Albert.

Mano walked his bike out the yard, mounted it, and pedaled slowly down the street.

“We gotta hurry or they’ll be gone, little homie.”

“Who?” said Albert.

“The mayatés,” said Mano. And he pedaled away.

Albert flipped through the bike’s gears. He and Mano pulled out of the varrio and onto the main drive with all the traffic and fast-food joints and gas stations. Cars whipped by the two as they moved. The naked smell of coming rain became distant and lost amid the exhaust and rubber of the moving vehicles. Even the smell of cooking-grease from the hamburger and chicken joints seemed to hold the air hostage. Some of the cars turned on their headlights. A light mist fell.

Albert and Mano biked three blocks away from the main drive, less than a quarter-mile away. They pulled into the parking lot of The Texas Meat Market, a ramshackle convenience store made of concrete and connected to a laundromat. Texas Meat Market was the kind of place that hung hand-painted, wooden signs advertising mollejas and tripas next to faded posters of happy men and women smoking Newport Cigarettes. A half torn

ad for King Cobra beer rapped in the wind. The parking lot itself was pot-holed and made of dirt. Concrete stoppers, about three-feet tall, surrounded the market’s front door to keep thieves from driving their car through the shop window and looting the place. Outside, minding their own business, were a group of five older black men. They were drinking quarts of Miller High-Life outside the laundromat and chatting under its tin awning. To Albert they looked tired and grizzled and unhappy. One man sat completely on the ground, his back against the wall. He rested his forehead on his knees. He became startled when the cigarette in his long fingers burned down to his knuckle, so he flicked it and lit another one.

Mano and Albert walked inside the store. Mano took a sixteen-ounce can of Busch Light from one of the ice-bins in the middle of the store. He paid with exact change.

“When we come out the store,” Mano said, “don’t say anything. Just watch my back.”

The clerk, a thin Indian boy with wire glasses, put the beer in a paper bag and handed it to Mano. The two walked out of the store. Gone was the delicate mist. Soft drops of rain began to stain the dirt parking lot. Mano popped his beer and drank. Two sips into it, a black man with a beard approached them.

“Say man, what you think it’ll take for you to run up and buy me one of them beers.”

“Gimme the bread for it,” said Mano with a kind of laugh.

“Man, all I got is this card. I can’t buy no beer with it.”

“Sorry, homie, I spent my last dime on this one,” said Mano, pointing to the can.

The man rubbed his beard and put his hands in his pockets and appeared to curse his luck under his breath. Albert thought that if he could he would buy the man a drink. He put his hands in his pockets and felt only fabric and a few balls of lint. The man with the beard came back.

“Tell you what, if you can get forty dollars, I’ll let you use this card to get fifty dollars worth of groceries from the store.”

“I ain’t got no money,” said Mano.

“What about your friend there,” said the man, pointing to Albert.

Albert’s heart shook in his chest.

“Maybe he wanna get some groceries for his momma.”

Mano took a sip of his beer. Without moving his eyes, he pulled his hand from his jacket pocket.

“We ain’t got nothing but this here *boy*.” In Mano’s palm were four tiny packets of dark brown heroin.

Albert’s stomach sank. He brought his hand up to scratch his neck and found it shaking. Weed was one thing, he thought. But this was heroin—bad shit. Jail time. Murderous shit.

Albert watched him. The bearded man’s face lit up, and Albert could tell that whatever scheme the man had was now gone. Real business had arrived.

“What you want for it?” asked the man.

Mano jammed his hand back in his pocket. “Twenty for one. Thirty-five for two. I got enough to put you and all your friends to bed.”

“Lemme talk to my council,” said the bearded man.

“Don’t talk too long.” Mano took the last drink of his beer, tilting his head back to get the final drop, and chucked it into an empty oil-drum that served as the market’s trashcan. He wiped his mouth and whispered, “Get on your bike. And when you see me go, you jet down the other way.”

Albert felt his legs wobble. His hands shook so nervously he could barely grip the handle bars. He slipped once trying to mount the bike. He did not look at Mano or the group of men talking. The dirt jumped alive with the hammer of fat rain drops. Then, as if someone had turned it on, slabs of rain came hissing down. The bearded man broke from his group and returned. He pulled up the collar to his jacket.

“What about four for fifty?” he asked.

“Sixty, homie,” said Mano.

“Fifty is all we got.”

“I seen you hustling them cards, taking thirty in cash for forty in food, sometimes less. I know you got the sixty.”

“Lemme see it then,” said the bearded man.

“Either you want it or you don’t. I got no time for games.”

The bearded man scowled and Albert thought that he might just hit Mano and take his drugs. What would stop him? Mano was small and feeble from his own addiction. Albert thought to pedal away now. But he did not.

“Alright,” said the man, “four for sixty.” Mano looked around and quickly made the exchange with the man in what would’ve looked like to anyone else like a simple handshake. Mano did not count the money. He pocketed it hurriedly, nearly

dropping one of the bills. He jumped on his bike and whipped off, water kicking up from the bike’s worn tires as it moved. And off into the dull grayness, Mano the hustler was gone and lost among the traffic. Albert was stunned. He had heard no signal like Mano had said. No one had said go. The men outside the laundromat assembled in a circle. The man with the beard held out his hand. Albert got on his bike and pushed the thing forward and was half-way out the parking lot when his foot slipped from the pedal almost bringing him to a tumble. The rain fell on his head and into his eyes and down his face in a drape. He righted the bike and put the crank into motion when a voice came screaming through the rain.

“Get that punk!”

That is what Albert heard, or something close to it. Now, the men were out from under the awning, their heavy feet splashing the puddled ground as they ran. Albert’s eyes grew big. They were after him, pointing their fingers even as they broke towards him. Albert brought his body up and tried to bring his feet upon the pedals. He missed them completely. He looked at the men and saw they were close—almost upon him. He struggled to get the bicycle into motion but his foot slipped again off the slippery plastic.

He could hear the men screaming for him, “Don’t let him get away!”

They were in the rain and closer. Their faces were angry. Tired. Fed up. Albert did not know what they wanted with him, nor did his body did care. His heart raced. His vision was precise. He saw across the street, down the block, past McMullen Drive and into his

neighborhood. Now if he could just get his body to take him there. He got the bike up to speed, rocking it from side to side as he stood pumped the pedals. He felt the rush of air. He was moving. He felt fingers at his back—close but now gone, their tips like spider legs narrowly missing him. A bottle crushed him in the temple. The side of his face burned. He felt glass shards sprinkle his arm and fall to the ground. He sped into the blur of the rain. He could still hear their angry voices. He did not look back until he had crossed the street and was down the block. Still he expected the men to be behind him, seething. But there was nothing but afternoon traffic and the barren sound of the bike’s cassette ticking in the rain.

When Albert arrived, Mano was at his house. His bike was tucked close to the wall, under the eaves. Albert’s legs burned. His head pounded. The rain washed the blood from his face onto his hoodie and farther down even onto his shorts and tennis shoes. Albert threw his bike down in front of Mano’s gate. Mano, as if owing the boy, walked out into the rain and met him.

“Why?” said Albert. He held his hand to his head and felt warm blood seeping out between his fingers.

Shielding his eyes from the rain with his hand, Mano spoke. “Cause it wasn’t real heroin, it was just dirt—tierra,” he said, giggling. He put his other hand out. Tucked in between his fingers was a single twenty-dollar bill.

Near tears, Albert asked Mano again. “But why? What for?”

Mano’s forehead pinched, his dry and old skin furling over his

eyes. “What do you mean *what for?*” His eyes blinked furiously in the rain. There was a soft rumble around them. Mano shook the bill at Albert, “Tómalo. Andalé.”

Albert did not take the money.

Mano looked away for a moment; a strange tint of shame took his face. He huffed. “Cause they’re there,” said Mano. A horrible ease came over his face. He crumpled the twenty into his pocket and walked back into the house and slammed the door behind him.

Albert slowly walked George’s bike back to his parent’s home. Shame and disgust bored their way into his head; perhaps, Albert thought, entering through the very wound he received earlier. Like a cloak, he felt a heavy sense of regret on him, that he had served a low humility to those already humbled—death to the dead. The bike clicked as he pushed it.

George was still on the porch, smoking one of the joints Albert had given. Albert brought the bike up the porch steps and out of the rain. He stared at Albert with his mouth slightly open.

“You okay, Caca?”

“I’m gonna wash up and change.”

“What happened to your face?”

Albert shrugged. “I fell.”

George laughed and stood up. “You should have seen it, Caca,” said George, “we were all ready to fuck that pig up, when it started raining. Hernando said we’ll do it once it stops.”

George followed Albert to the door. Albert stopped short of going inside. He looked at George’s fat smile. George continued talking. “So you didn’t miss nothing. You can still

come see us kill it if you want. You wanna see?”

Albert turned away and went in the house where it was dry and warm. Behind him, through the closed door, he could still hear George chirping.

“Hey! Hey, don’t you wanna see?”