

the unwanted guest

i guess this is how the story should start: Joaquin has walked a million kilometers north, smiling to the sun dropping like a giant fruit through clouds of dust and red as hell. Far to his right are tiny mountains and to the left, but beyond his sight, the ocean that the sun is diving into. Walking north of course through a field of dirt and with a tired back with his life in a piece of cloth over his shoulder, hanging.

Butterflies are floating in his stomach from anticipation and a smile cracks into his face. Right now he doesn't mind so much the tearing through searchlights and search dogs, guns and barbed wire, and rivers and fences. He decides to keep walking into the dark tonight. He feels his journey coming to an end soon.

Joaquin has the gift and passion of a great artisan and in the dark of the day, when everyone else is quietly sleeping, he makes clay figurines that in his tired and bruised hands come to life. Figurines of the past: his dead daughters and sons, his wife dying while giving birth to a dead nameless miniature boy. The small unpainted figurines of clay have wings and smile and can't remember better days because there probably were none.

He left his village with tears down his face. A small handmade village whose houses of tin are rolling onto each other on the side of a hill. It's a small frightened village made of glass bottles and plastic tarps that are tripping over themselves. Houses falling and grasping each other's frozen veins as if they were huddling in from a blizzard. The stench of an angry sewage system that never worked visits every cloth door. Skeleton dogs parade the streets and play with children. Activity is heard from every narrow, crooked, banged-up dirt road. Seen from far above, the city turns into a speck at the base of a mountain, and off to the north a bigger city buried in pollution can be seen. On the road between the two Joaquin is walking, crying.

One billion tons of concrete built on water. The buildings are giant and decrepit and they hide their tops in the cloud of exhaust that engulfs the tremendous city. Tired cars made of string congest the cracking streets, like a puzzle, honking. And Joaquin, walking through the disaster of human multitudes buzzing through the streets or lying drunk or hungry beneath the million feet that didn't stop that day, stops for a while to listen. The music of horns and familiar commotion, like concealed complaints, hums so loud that it almost shakes apart the crowded cars and plywood trucks. The hum shakes the city, and the crooked buildings sway like drunks; and if the city was quiet maybe their chuckles of misery could be heard. Unlike those who traveled here for a chance at a chance at a chance, Joaquin keeps walking north.

in the day somebody sleeps in the walls. The house is completely at peace and sometimes you can hear them stir to distribute blood and snore.

Transparent men own the house. Absorbed inside themselves they walk in and out of the house at similar times. At night they sink through the door and into the television set and make no noise until they go to sleep.

In the night the walls are quiet, the snores are gone. The transparent men are lost in their giant beds stuffed with clouds, sleeping in their feet pajamas.

In the morning the Men wake up to find a table full of grapes and corn and strawberries and peanuts, and clean toilets and sparkling driveways, and their yards with grass like green carpet and animal shaped bushes. The Men never think of the offerings of the breakfast table made by the hands of architects and surgeons and pilots and dancers. They eat until they almost crack their fat stomachs. They leave the house in suits and impossibly colored ties, already on their phones conducting important business. They leave to the city in their cars made of gold, and already money begins to fall from their mouths. They hide from the sun inside their offices, 300 stories high with windows made of water, and so, like

deep ocean fish they turn transparent.

Two cats, a clumsy black one and the devil who is white, live in the house. Its ceilings reach over heaven and its architecture is stolen from a genius. It's deserted except for the two felines that roam around for hours and still haven't been in every room. The dark one rests in the shadows of the house and falls from room to room, sleeping. The white one, always asleep in the sunlight of the giant windows, sleeps with its eyes open. The cats are hunters and don't think about blood and the soul; and so, like mice, the people asleep in the walls occasionally come out for less than a few seconds. They tiptoe on the walls so as not to disturb the napping cats and then submerge back into the walls. The tiny cats know everything. They know they own the still and silent air-conditioned house and they sleep in quiet.

when the night honestly dropped, he saw some motion in the fields ahead and they took him in like family.

"But no," he argued "I have these hands." And even though they didn't look up he showed them his hands as if they didn't believe him. "These are my hands!" he screamed shaking his hands at the crowded field of people bent over their work.

The only man that had stopped to look at Joaquin went back to work under the burning moon that was hotter than eight suns.

They wake up at one o'clock in the night and work like oxen, sweating dust, up to their knees in pesticides. With handkerchiefs hiding their faces and heads from the enraged moon, they look more like machine-gunned warriors hiding in the fields than agricultural workers. Handkerchiefs covering their mouths as if they were cursing through their hidden smiles in a tongue those fields don't recognize. Handkerchiefs tied over their heads as if they had been holding loaded weapons and are furious enough to kill the burning moon that scorches their heads. The stench of the pesticides keeps them moving too slow for guns and all they can think of is how blessed they are for not being where they once were and still

resentful that they had to lose so much to be here working until their hands bleed and blister in the moonlight. Working until their own spirits have to drag their exhausted bodies and baskets from the field back to the giant house to hose them off in the driveway. Their spirits look down at the wet pile of bodies that are drying in the darkness of a sunrise, coughing up toxins and dust.

the transparent men are beginning to die off. And leave it up to the one with the diamond colored tie to accredit all this to the snores in the walls. Leave it to the one with teeth of gold to suggest calling in an exterminator to destroy the giant rats that tumble around in the walls every once in a while in their sleep to distribute the blood with a machine-gun in their hands and a handkerchief over their mouths. Leave it to them to blame the girl next door.