

Following the Coyote

Mario Vanegas

I'm lucky to have been born here, there, nowhere. I never had to leave my family. The smell of shrapnel everywhere, tainting the city with the stench of iron. The city walls splattered with maroon like a blooming hibiscus. The shriek of death is the sound of metal scraping skin clean off the bone. The windows become smaller, they bleed the tears of our ancestors. Your home begins to birth the beast. Scrubbing the windows and walls, the dried residue of its venom creeping in every crevice. The residue seeps under the nail bed and infects the body with fear. The beast lives in the home, everyone bloodthirsty. Death is at every corner and counter. It seeks to take all that has seen the maroon city. The journey away from the maroon city leads to a river so pristine from a distance. The water is a morpho butterfly waving its wings in the mountains. The soft murmurs of the water. The thirst that overcomes is unbearable, the dry cottonmouth tastes like eating half burnt cigs. The river widens. I see the reflection of the dead living in the water. Drowning for eternity. The water is dirty and murky infused with rust, it smells like the stomach acid that's regurgitated after a week-long bender. The water slowly sinks its clinch around your neck. Nearly dead, the voice of freedom in the distance. The river decides who makes it to the other side. The first gasp of air is so intense that obsidian pierces the lungs. Running is my last hope. Hiding is the only option. I'm lucky to be alive. Everything has been taken from us. The blood of our ancestors is on your hands. You hate me, I hate you. But I love you too. Your beautiful mountains and valleys lush green full of liberty. The voice of equality is the sweet voice of mermaids serenading sailors. It's a mirage, a mansion with no light. A car with no engine. All flash, no function.