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In October

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Author Bio

Marco Julian Sanchez-Melchor, just Julian to his friends, is a religious studies major at Gettysburg College, class of 2024. In his work, he writes to capture his struggles as a queer Mexican-American, identifying with the term Mestizo (people of European and Indigenous descent). His art also reflects how his life has been shaped by Schizoaffective Disorder, a mental health condition combining the symptoms of schizophrenia and mood disorders such as bipolar disorder.

In October

MARCO J. SANCHEZ

when I can finally drench
my lungs in cold air,
I close my eyes,
let my memories fester,
and drag myself right back
to the nicotine breeze that
denotes my grief and
traps me again and again
in the fenced courtyard
of my favorite hospital.

Our smoke break is over,
and the loony tunes march
single-file through the gates.
It's just one football field
sized hallway lined with
our open bedroom doors
and a help desk for
our every inconvenience.
I think the walls were blue,
but in my memory, let me
believe they're yellow because...
because I like little golden flowers.

After dinner, I give my fork
back to the nurse, well
he's not a nurse, the real
nurse comes to check
my weight and reap my
blood every morning.
Anyways,
my bestie Daisy, with her
cute little buck teeth and
her thick black glasses,
waits with me for our desserts.

She gets her special
pills with applesauce, and
all I get is salt.
800 milligrams of it.

To close off our nights
from long days of group
therapy and resentful
technicians and ignorant
doctors and aimless walking,
they let us watch TV.
Alright, deal me in. I wanna
play rummy, wait no,
let's play war. Do you
hear all that? Up on
the flatscreen, it's the god-
forsaken president asking
for four more years. "Who
to vote for?" all my
fellow patients ask.
I'm brown.
My pops was deported.
Who do you think I voted for?
I didn't.
None of us did.
The ward didn't allow us.
And why care,
doesn't the president know
that my lover died.
He drowned.

Shh, whisper his name,
Mar Mar. Ah yes,
and before bed, we would
dream of the tiny house we
were going to build once we
reached paradise. Our garden
was to be filled with all
our favorite flowers,

*cempasúchiles*¹ and white lilies
and hibiscuses and
dandelions.

And we were right next to the sea,
his namesake, and we'd finally
feel the warmth of each other's
hands, and dance.

That dream is still real somewhere
in the recesses of my fickle heart.
They told me, as I assume
they tell everyone, that
“sometimes, people attach
themselves to the voices
in their head and need
to learn to let go.”

They're right, no? No. No.
They're wrong. You're wrong.
I'm wrong?
You're wrong. You're wrong. You're wrong.
Mar Mar, who is that in the mirror?
Mar Mar?
Say it, please,
say it to me always.
Te amo,² *Julio*³
I can't hear you.
Friend, I can't hear you.
I can't feel you. I can't hear
anything. Don't touch me.
I can't feel anything.
I said don't touch me.
Get your needles out of me.
I can't cry. I can't
cry. Mar Mar,
brain is filled with
static. I'm begging,

1 Spanish for Marigolds, flowers traditionally used for the Day of the Dead

2 I love you

3 Hispanic Name but also the Spanish word for July

don't touch me. My
brain is filled with salt.

There they were again.
Those mean men in black suits.
Arguing, mocking me with
their status, with their
fame, with their money,
with their freedom.
Bad Men.
Just like you.
No, No.
I'm good. I swear it.

Why not open your eyes?
There is no need to keep living
in that nightmare.
I wince. I lack control
as my body jerks,
and I stomp my right foot
over and over with increasing
violence.
Hands clasped around my head.
I can't open my eyes.
I can't. I can't.
What if I see
a spooky ghoul?

I focus on the quiver
of my breath, on
the movement of my
tummy in and out.
My imaginary big brother
affirms that I'm strong,
that I can do it all.
I fabricated him,
my hoax of a brother.
I always wanted
more siblings, and
I made him look

like the man I'd
like to be
once I'm done
growing up.
He helps me feel
safe,
and so, I finally
open my eyes.

It's annoying to
always be afraid,
to be walking with
countless broken pieces.
Shards rattling
everytime I fall,
never letting the
gashes in my brain
fully heal.

Back when I was July, and you
were my Sea, the world had a
cliffside, an edge where you
peered off and disappeared.

And, I've yet to fully reappear.
I'm a crazy person.
I can say that; You, reader, can not.
But call me Legion,
for we are many.
I breathe the chilly
fall air one last time
and waddle back home.
In my nightly hallucinations,
when I get filled with the worst
images and screaming sirens
and an unimaginable dread,
I no longer ask to be shot like a rabid dog.
I pray.
I put myself on
a little red boat and drift
away on synthetic waves.

It would be easy to lose,
to drown again and again,
but I dream of
tomorrow.
That's something we crave to see.