

Virgin of Guadalupe

by Phil Macnitt

The first time I visited Isabel's apartment was about five weeks after I met her. The single room apartment she occupied was a mess. The walls were lined with Mexican tapestries she had acquired during the five years she'd lived in Apatzingan and photographs of men who had been false in their love for her. One of the men particularly irritated me because the crooked line of his nose and his thin lips reminded me of my father. As I explored the room, I carefully stepped over stacks of books and piles of clothes. A bra hung from the lampshade and I was imagining how beautiful her breasts must be when she asked, "Care for some?" holding out a bottle of pomegranate wine.

"Of course, I love pomegranate wine." I never had pomegranate wine before, but allowed myself the occasional lie in the name of love.

"I brought you something,"

We sat together at a small table in the corner of her room. Isabel poured the wine into old Looney Tunes glasses she'd carefully preserved since the late seventies. Hers had Sylvester while mine was Porky Pig. She took the first drink. Her fingers, thick and short, obscured Sylvester completely as she took a large mouthful of the wine. I, on the other hand, drank my wine slowly, swishing it around in my mouth – a habit I had picked up from drinking soda as a child. It allowed me to better taste the wine, but more importantly served as a distraction that kept me from having to speak. I was terrified. I had never been in a woman's home. More petrifying was the fact that I had never been in a woman, the thought itself had been well outside my comprehension before that night and my anxiety was so intense I even thought that the daisies on the table had turned their petals towards me, lured by my virginal scent.

By the time I made it to the third glass, I had set myself at a more liberal pace. I enjoyed the wine. The sour tannic taste pleased me and I imagined that it must be the same taste as her sweat, which pleased me even more. I even dismissed the lie I told earlier as merely a moment of clairvoyance, something I had picked up from my mother who could always divine whenever my sister was going to soil our family name. However, later in life I learned from my aunt that my sister's haughtiness and animal sensuality had blossomed from the wrecked stems of my mother's own youthful debaucheries, leaving my mother as more of a capable historian than a psychic.

The next hours passed quickly, as did the next glasses of wine. She told, me, again, of the time she spent married to a German bicyclist.

"Klaus," she said wistfully, her big cheeks blushing both from the memory and the wine. "He was so fast, his feet upset the clouds!" She reared back in her chair, kicking her feet. "And all of his damned races had to be won in the rain!"

I listened absently, not because I was jealous of his exploits, but because I was attempting to recall any of my own. The only sexual experience I could recall involved paying one of my junior-high classmates six dollars to watch me masturbate behind **Mr. Uhl's math class**. Even this had been a tragic failure, so much so, that the girl gave me four of my dollars back.

"I need a smoke." Isabel said rather drunkenly as she rummaged through her purse, **"Want one?"**

"Not at all."

"Suit yourself." She made her way out onto the balcony, her big legs surprisingly lithe as they navigated between stacks of books and over a toppled vase filled with peacock feathers.

I got up and walked towards her bed, taking the last bottle of wine with me. On my way I picked up a ceramic statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe that rested on her nightstand. I carried it with me, cradling her like a child in my arm while taking long drinks from the bottle. I was convinced, and still am, that she was only one that could understand me at that moment. I asked her, **"Tell me, what does a woman think of as she smokes? Does she think of me?"**

Empowered by wine and filled with the Holy Spirit, I undressed my self and quickly hid my gawky legs and the genitals hanging between them, which I thought awkward and small, underneath the covers of her full-sized bed and waited.

She entered without acknowledging me, moved towards the bed and quietly undressed. As she walked to turn out the light her large, magnificent, pale ass resembled two zip-loc bags filled with mashed potatoes, each stride from her thick legs shaking their contents and exciting me more and more. She made her way back to the bed in darkness, but her skin had been so thinned through the years that her bones, which were illuminated with nicotine, produced a faint glow that cast shadows behind us as I awkwardly pawed and groped her body. Sensing my inexperience, she began to guide me through the motions.

We continued to roll and tumble in her bed as I kissed her and attempted to love her **with every available part of my body**. She'd kept herself well preserved but as I kissed my way down her body my lips picked up every grain of her long sad life like two slugs tasting their way across the mid-day cement. **I didn't pity her**, though. How could I? She wore each wrinkle and scar on her body with the same pride and vigilance that the Virgin of Guadalupe wore her crown of twelve stars.