

Merlin's blue hat

bent over in strawberry fields
while I lounged in a wicker chair
and felt pale.

Stained baseball caps
and Merlin's blue hat
stood up and bent forward, stood up and bent forward.
I sipped lemonade
in a wicker chair
and felt pale.

While the cool porch
with Spanish tiles
was making more
lemonade, I strolled
towards Merlin's blue hat,
felt conversational and asked:

Do you enjoy your work? Do you like picking strawberries?

She didn't understand. I ran
back to the porch.
I felt pale—parched
for more lemonade.

Ennui in Mission, TX

I didn't want the Whataburger to end my night, but gas station merlot couldn't keep me home.

Instead, I blink at loitering boys with puffy jackets bouncing on the hoods of cars as they wink and nod at a stout girl with a checkered scarf. She raises her lip and snarls through her nose. They shove her shoulder and break her coquettish pout.

I catch a glimpse of her ample thigh as she bends forward, but my gaze is broken by a lachrymal man as he walks through the W shadow
sniffing and heaving down a dark road.

I follow him.

He winces
at the touch of his left shoulder.

“What's the matter?”

He shakes his head not comprehending what I'm saying. He walks on and I feel like he wants me to follow. A lust for confrontation, knowing all my possessions are locked away, propels me forward.

In the darkness the earth clicks and croaks at the lachrymal man and I.

A pale orange light gives us a glimpse of a small house made of damp wood. Next to it is a field of neatly plowed columns. Clouds of bugs hover above creating a new troposphere around shrubs I'll never name or plant. I want to be in that world where I'm in possession of calloused hands
and a damp house.

Grandma Figueira rocks in a wicker chair
and points at me.

“Ennui! Ennui!”

I can shake my head.

“No, Grandma. No ennui. See?”

I present my hands as proof.

My smile is broken by the lachrymal man's rough hand guiding my lower back towards a gray minivan. The shards of glass on the driver's seat manifest in ultraviolet nano-flashes. The lachrymal man heaves and reanimates the scenes with elastic waves from his right arm. He ends and assumes I'll provide him with a companion answer.

I nod and smile.

He becomes distraught
shaking me hoping he'll rattle out the correct response.

I frown.

I am afraid.

Then he sticks his pinky and thumb out putting what is left of his fist to his ear.

“Cellular! Cellular!”

I shake my head.

“No. No.”

He groans falling back into the van. I shrug and look back the way I came.

Grandma Figuiera will be there on my return journey. I tell myself
just be polite and wave.

Poorly Worded Crows and Nameless Purple Crops in the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

I wrote down Tam-aw-lee-pass¹ Crows. The others did their best to transcribe his Anglo pronunciation. His partner revved the tram's trinity of carts up a gravel incline leaving behind the forward-stroking fronds and the click-click siren songs from the murders of our transliterated crows. We leveled on an elevated road overlooking purple crops bordered by gushing PVC moats.

“Did I pronounce that right?”

The Chicana in the front row nodded.

“Well I don't know much 'bout that, but crows where I come from just caw,” declared the white head in front of me.

“What kind of crops are those over there,” I asked with translucent knuckles.

“I don't know.”

A black border patrol truck hurrying the opposite way pinged gravel off the guests and tram carts. Indignation, like clouds of pesticide over purple crops, rose. The tour guide put on a soothing face: “Nothing to fear. They keep this place safe. If you go out walking later, smile and wave to them. They aren't after ya'll.”

¹ Tamaulipas

Gringo in the Rio Grande Valley

I cannot understand solidarity. My dictionary says it means sol-id-ar-i-dad. “¿Cómo se dice? ¿Cómo se dice?” My index finger gets tired. Back home language instructors diversify our monolingual schools. “¿Cómo se dice? ¿Cómo se dice?” The Rio Grande Valley pinks my pigmentation and asks *what are you doing here* instead of *oh, what brings you here?* “¿Cómo se dice? ¿Cómo se dice?” I loathe cómo se dice, but mere sandspur problems that I don’t pull out, that don’t scar, that consume the Gulf of Mexico’s breath, that are shaded by the beach mansions of my people. Cómo se dice translated, never understood.