

The Disappearance
and
the Slow Awakening



by
Tony R. Rodriguez



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A novel attempted

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**To Helena,
for believing in a Frog.**

**And for those beams that gleam
on infinite streams.**

"The Disappearance and the Slow Awakening"

From her lips flew arrows I wish I did not Own,
And I felt such Affliction, with tears not Shown.
Compared I did the great loves of past Similar;
For once I felt such Elation in blessed Particular.

And now—thanks to foolish actions—I do Scour
From a Lamp whose contents will undoubtedly Sour.
Her name: quite common to those who've Heard.
'Such splendor!' I, with a gleam, would often Word.

Strong was our Love and soon we Learned:
'Together, such mirth!' we often Confirmed.
And so after years of joy and worth things turned to the
Red:
'Our Love remains a question'—a Sunflower once Said.

'One cannot comprehend your thoughts and drive to be
what it Is.'

Such rhapsody was lost in the interminable actions of His.
'But does the plethora of angelic voices still chant in his
Mind?'

—Fond memories festoon in this Mind, well Confined.

So please pass from this poor soul you terrible Deed,
And restore Affection to this Milkweed—this I so Plead.
'Be true and be Gold!' I one day fancy to AWAKE.

—Desi Marquiso

Part 1

The Disappearance

Chapter 2

Art For the Sake of Art

Thursday (11:23 a.m.)

Standing in front of my second story living room window, I looked down towards the street and watched Elena scuttle to her car, weeping like a child. I just stared down at her and watched her cry. I was motionless, perplexed, and altogether crumbled. Not once did I even consider running after her. That Thursday morning, I found myself wanting this to happen. I knew the purpose of her early visit was to tell me that things were over. Her behavior over the past month had led me to believe that this day would soon come. Things hadn't been going well in our relationship for quite sometime now. For the past year and a half, Elena and I had been *on* and *off* like a light switch. And after arguing that Thursday morning about my lack of care, consideration, and understanding, Elena and I were now, once again, *off*, and according to her it was entirely my fault—I'm beginning to believe her.

Elena is the first and only love of my life. I've had multiple partners from the time I was seventeen to twenty. I've abused and romanced many women—strumpets, naives, and spur-of-the-moments. In the past, I've indulged in the married, engaged, and the recently broken-up. But none have ever compared to the blessed radiance of Elena Marie. During the early years of our relationship, just the sight of Elena would make me gleam with such mirth, such gratitude. Her light blue eyes and radiant golden hair would tickle every one of my senses whenever we were together. Her smile, Elena's beautiful smile, could sway me into anything. She had the kind of appearance you could look at for hours, excitement glistening off your face from staring at such a sight.

We were happy.

We were in love.

Together, Elena and I have shared four years of *great* moments. But, unfortunately, over the following year and a

half we had endured unnecessary, agonizing situations all too familiar to the everyday couple. And to be honest, most of it was probably my fault. During our early years, I would do for Elena sweet things that other women in my past could only have hoped for. In retrospect, I've done things with those past others Elena couldn't possibly imagine. She is, and will always be, my adoration. If things would only work between us—If I could only—there are so many "If's".

During the first few years, we never had any difficult relationship problems communication couldn't take care of. But like most long-term relationships, over the past year and a half there had been plenty of moments when one of us felt that relinquishing need to step away from the other. And that Thursday morning—after two hours of hysterical crying and yelling and hearing words that felt like piercing arrows—I felt like stepping away, too.

Sooner or later, all couples question the reasons they are committed to one another. And at times, some of these couples realize that their only purpose for being with one another is not because of *love*, but because of the *time* vested into that person. And that Thursday morning, watching her leave my apartment in tears, I couldn't decide which one I was feeling. And it was at that moment the frustration began:

I retreated upstairs into my bedroom and flung myself onto my bed. I tossed and turned and felt anger smoldering every portion of my body. Scenes from Elena's recent visit tormented my mind with visions and words that pummeled my train of thought. I tried to focus. I thought of the great loves in history and compared my similar flaws. I then thought of the many protagonists in literature and could relate to their fatuous actions—how each was their own antagonist. I was slowly slipping into a craze filled with self-loathing.

My sight bounced from wall to wall.

Frustration.

Anguish.

Fear.

Then it happened:

Voices whispering.

Trumpets blaring.

Words mixing.

Magic.

Desi Marquiso.

And I couldn't help but fade into losing myself, sacrificing myself to a potent spell of creation. A voice in my head began to sing and beg for release. I was consumed by a power I can only attempt to explain. My mind was entranced and completely overwhelmed by chaos, which then transformed into creation.

In my room, I sat at my desk. I grabbed a sharpened pencil and tore a piece of paper out of my notebook. I began to write! I began to write words blessed with so much passion a muse would have been envious. Every word I wrote seemed to have an omnipotent force that felt exhilarating. And as I wrote these words, I couldn't help but repeat them over and over like the melody of a catchy song. I filled my entire room with poetic words—poetic eloquence—that seemed to fit like pieces to a jigsaw puzzle. I finished the first six lines and read every word to my bedroom walls as if they were an audience of eager listeners. I stretched the neckline of my sweatshirt and continued to write, capturing a story that spoke of the things I felt, the voices I heard.

I was possessed by an inspiration that drove me into a mental craze of insatiable wonder. And at that moment, nothing could stop me. My eyes were glued to the page as I gave birth to the seventh line of my piece. My pencil danced across the paper as if it were a wand sprinkling complete beauty. My palms became dampened with moisture. I wiped that moisture along my sweatpants and quickly gripped my wand, spilling more magic across the page. I was making love and sparks flew.

Poetry!

More impressive words sprouted onto the page like magnolias. My fingers began to burn and plead for a moment of rest, but I didn't stop. I didn't want to lose a single word that was pouring into my mind. And after the fourteenth line, I again wiped the moisture from my palms onto my sweatpants. I paused and allowed my fingers to breathe and stretch.

Poetry!

I attempted to continue. But something wasn't right. I lifted my wand and gripped it with such desire, such need, but no magic was to be found. I couldn't write. I couldn't

create. Something was most peculiar. I wiped my hands, again, on my sweatpants. But nothing! Then it occurred to me. I realized I felt suffocated. I needed some sort of release. My mind was overwhelmed, perplexed. And then it hit me. I knew what I had to do. I peeled my sweatpants off and flung them over my head toward my dresser. I pulled off my sweatshirt and tossed it over my shoulder, as well. I now only had my boxers and socks on. But I felt free. I felt alive.

Again, I sat at my desk and picked up my wand and continued to twirl beautiful language onto the thin blue lines. The freedom of losing my sweatpants manifested an insatiable beating inside of me. With every beat, every boost of adrenaline, I continued to write with such passion, such heart. My commas made their way throughout the poem, singing, rejoicing, celebrating, kissing, and adoring their exceptional, elated, magnificent birth. The dashes—my favorite punctuation—were born quite remarkably—they marched—paraded—performed such brilliance. My colons: they gave a unique touch to my poetic style: stamps of genius: they allowed the following line to construe everything I wanted to say. And I couldn't forget to use the semi-colons; a couple of my periods transcended into proud semi-colons; they created such character to my piece; they formed a strong bond with the previous line; they were now connected with such grace; they were almost dependent on one another.

I reached the eighteenth line and felt the closure beginning to transpire. My final words were like soldiers returning home to a welcoming crowd as they marched across the page, saluting the reader. The piece was grand: I used beautiful-sounding words I couldn't help but repeat aloud to the walls: festooned, elation, rhapsody, plethora, and interminable. I wrote clever metaphors of Elena as a Sunflower, and I as a Milkweed. It was brilliant, magnificent; it was mine!

The piece was almost finished. I read my poem over and over. I corrected a few spelling mistakes, but that was all. I believe, like most poets, there are no mistakes in writing poetry. It doesn't matter how many words you may have on one line. It doesn't matter if you group your words in lines or stanzas. It doesn't even matter if your poem rhymes. You don't have to write poetry in Limerick or Haiku or

Sonnet or Couplet or Quatrain form. You can write poetry in Free Verse: no rules, just magic! And I for one wrote poetry in many different forms, depending on my feelings at the time of creation—sometimes prosody, sometimes prose. And although Professor Roubane from San Francisco State would argue differently, to me it doesn't even matter if your poetry makes sense. All that truly matters in writing poetry is the blessing of creation. Your creation! Your magic! Your words! Your song! But what do I know?

And there it was.

I only needed to title it:

The Disappearance and the Slow Awakening.

It was finished. I read the entire piece over and over. It was such an overwhelming sensation that my mind and body felt as if it were on fire. I couldn't stop reading it. The walls of my bedroom became my audience once again. I imagined cheers and encores every time I recited the last few words of my beautiful piece. I was consumed by the magic of creation. I had transformed the recent visit from Elena into a beautiful piece by me: Desi Marquiso!

"The Disappearance and the Slow Awakening!" And again I began to recite. My bedroom walls cheered and hailed at such prosody. It was grand. I felt like Yeats or Cummings or Ginsberg or the great Donne. And don't forget the clever Millay, there were similarities in our work.

But it wasn't enough. Although the piece seemed quite natural, I didn't. I was on fire and needed to cool off. I looked at my reflection in the mirror on the wall and thought of something. It was something senseless and, for most people, repulsively disgusting. But it felt right, it was more right than it was wrong. And so I did it. I removed my boxers and socks and flung them next to my sweatpants. I saw myself again in the mirror. I saw myself as I would like to be—innocent.

I was beautiful. My light brown hair appeared so delicate and smooth. My light green eyes were like jewels fixed into the side of a well-tanned mountain. My smile seemed natural and never fading. And at that most fantastic moment, I was truly one of God's creatures—rejoicing such a moment. Even after a difficult two hours with Elena, there I was truly living.

I began to change for work. I put on fresh boxers and a fresh pair of socks. I smiled profusely at myself in the mirror. I was Golden. I was alive. I felt like a child who had shown his parents his first watercolor painting from school. I went to my closet and chose my finest pair of slacks and put them on as if I was changing for a prom. I buttoned up my collared shirt and fixed my tie with such pride, such exuberance, you would have giggled. I put on my polished black shoes and fastened the laces quite earnestly.

Desi Marquiso!

Then I made my way downstairs to the living room. I sat on the couch and turned on the television, still smiling. I flipped through the channels for a moment in order to find something to pass the half-hour before work. Once I reached the news channel, I immediately turned the television off. I couldn't watch it anymore. At this point in time, the news seemed too repetitive. Although it was highly shocking and quite morose, everyday, for the past month, the news presented the same terrible stories. First, the tragic animal attacks: sharks attack a small boy in Florida; a dog viciously murders a female resident just outside the front door of her San Francisco apartment; and yet another dog attack in Richmond that tore a little boy's arms and legs to shreds. And once the animal attacks had finished, the headlines came sweeping in: power shortages across California; rolling black-outs; high price PG&E bills Californians are forced to pay; and the notorious Presidential Election that is still being reverberated as being fixed. And then the latest headline: a missing intern from California disappeared somewhere in Washington D.C. The intern was believed to be secretly involved with a respected California Congressman, whom denies any knowledge of her whereabouts. The news was entirely depressing. The only tragic news missing would be a terrorist attack on American soil. I had to get away. I couldn't risk losing my euphoric state.

I decided to leave my worn down apartment and drive to work. I was still gleaming, praying that it would never end. I decided to drive around the City and take the long way to work. I cruised down Mission Street until I reached Duboce, where I turned left. A few blocks up, I again turned left and drove up Market, climbing one of the largest hills in San Francisco. A mile or two later, I made yet another left

onto Castro and cruised on. Once I reached Twenty-seventh, I made my final left. I sailed back down the hill, back towards Mission Street. The views were spectacular, sensational, my City by the bay.

Elena.

Her house was nearby on Guerrero. It was just a few blocks away from where I grew up, a few blocks from where I used to live before I moved to the Vis Valley District. I didn't drive by to see her or talk with her. I just wanted to know where she was. But when I drove by, her car wasn't there. She was probably driving around the City and reflecting on what had happened earlier. Possibly feeling guilty? Happy? Distraught? Or maybe she wasn't. Maybe she was out with her friends, laughing and celebrating her freedom. But I know that's not the truth. Or is it?

I drove on a little further down Guerrero to see my old house, where my father, Vincente Marquiso, still lives alone. Such memories! Such Faith I had when I lived in that house! And such a great part of the City, this Guerrero Street! Growing in this part of Town was something special, much better than Vis Valley, much better than the ridiculously small apartment I live in now. But I needed to move out and continue to grow —Vis Valley was all I could afford.

Finally, I made my way back onto Mission and continued on toward work. I didn't see it as driving in a massive circle. I saw it as consuming and altogether appreciating some of the many picturesque views of San Francisco, not to mention satisfying my curious thoughts. I was still lost in my euphoric state; I couldn't stop smiling. I felt so alive I could have kissed the air!

This was why I wrote poetry.

I wrote words for the uncontrollable feeling of creation. Deep inside all of us there is a fire that ignites throughout our bodies, smoldering all negativity whenever we create the literary art of poetry. Sometimes this flame goes unnoticed for years, decades. But it's there. And it's waiting. And one day it will explode, if only for five minutes, and elevate a person's mind towards beauty, towards creation! I strongly believe that deep down everyone is a poet, even if the person doesn't write.

I have never been published. And I have never sought an audience. I have only shared my poetic words with a

limited few. However, last month, for the sake of humoring Elena, I submitted my poems for the annual M.J. Vazquez Award at SF State—this was entirely her idea. So I entered. Realistically, I knew my chances of winning were quite slim, but I didn't care. I rarely even thought of that silly contest. My rewards for writing poetry were quite different. The truth was I wrote poetry for *me* and me only. I wrote words that made me sear with such elation, words that made me feel altogether alive.

And that Thursday morning, after writing "The Disappearance and the Slow Awakening", I was on fire! I was a magician, an acrobat of literature, a knight of English poetry. Nothing was going to bring me down. Elena may have told me that it was over for good, but I wasn't going to let it ruin the rest of my day. My job was dreadful; it was hell each day I worked. And even though a part of me wanted to call Elena and beg for resolve, I couldn't afford to call in sick. I needed money, and my bills were slowly piling—rent, car, phone, cell phone, Visa, MasterCard, etc.

At the end of my beautiful drive, I parked my car and walked through the front doors of my work—ten minutes early and still smiling. Nothing was going to bring me away from my exuberance, my euphoria, my Zen state, my bottle-rocket of emotions. Nothing! Or so I thought.

About the Author:

Tony R. Rodriguez

Tony Richard Rodriguez was born in Fremont, California on August 22, 1977. With a degree in Liberal Studies, he graduated from San Francisco State University in 2002. He is currently a middle school teacher—Literature and English being his favorite subjects of instruction. When Tony is not getting kicked out of school, driving cross-country, making soap, writing about a special girl, playing in Pamplona, Spain, sun-tanning in San Juan, or trying to figure out what to do with this One Ring, Tony frequents karaoke dives, the ATM machine, sleeping-in, and fast food restaurants. Imaginatively, he still lives in San Francisco, California. *The Disappearance and the Slow Awakening* is his first novel.