

New Fiction by LN Lewis: “Her Boyfriend Felipe”



“You must really like mango.”

The girl lifts them, one, two, three, and puts them in the paper bag, but it’s me she is looking at. Sort of. One eye fixes on me and the other eye wanders off to the side as she faces me across La Florcita’s counter from behind jars of sticky Mexican sweets.

“Who doesn’t like mango?”

“I’d rather have flan.”

“I hate flan. Kools hardpack, please.”

She rings up the cash register and then glances at the debit card. “Ten dollars. Sonora... Vayo. Qué lindo.”

Shudder. Everyone but my mother calls me Sunny.

All dramatic, she turns and points to the wall behind her, covered with business cards, calendars, and head shots of

Becky G and Khaldoun Younes because, güey, estamos en Hollywood. Next to an autographed 1990s J-Lo is a poster of two boxers facing off: "LUJAN vs. VAYO."

"Are you related to this Vayo?"

"Ay, que feo. Jamás."

"No, not the bald one. The one with the curls!" she calls after me as I stroll out the jingling door into the evening. Over the sound system of passing Explorer roars Sekreto, I hear hoots, laughter, and someone hollering over the bass line, "MARICÓN!"

No, not even close. And if you are screaming that at me, you are lucky you're moving at forty miles per hour.

When I get home, I toss a mango at my sister Ana Belen, stretched out on the yellow living room sofa, grinding at her laptop, and make my way into the kitchen, sweeping aside fronds of a hanging fern I want to rip down and throw in the trash. A couple of plants are nice, but Ma has a jungle in here. She adds a stalk of windowsill fennel to frying pork chops as I wash a mango and ask, "Want some?"

La Doña Esperanza Pinel Molina is smaller than any of us, but out of all of our family, she's the one you really would not want to fight.

"We eat in a little while. Save it for dessert."

"I can't wait." I slice my mango, salt it, light up a Kool, and head out to the garage. My nephew Javier stretches out on the lounge playing Fortnite, and in shorts, shoes, and sweat, Felipe works his speed bag. All I see is a blur as his fists punish the Everlast.

"Can I have some?" asks Javier.

"Get outta here with that smoke," orders Felipe.

“Ay, the one with the curls!” I simper and then slouch in a raggedy lawn chair by the back steps, enjoying my cigarette and letting Javier finish the mango as I check notifications on my phone.

I have the same profile pic from high school, back when I had just one eyebrow piercing and long, black hair. I looked like a total digit. Jeannie Morales is having her third baby, dammit, and Nita Cartagena has been accepted into the accounting program at UC Northridge. Then I notice a “friend request” from some Milagros Toboso. Her profile pic is not even full frontal; it actually is a profile. I realize who it is and burst out laughing.

“FelipeSonoraJavier, come and eat!”

2

“Sonora, hi!”

Suddenly I am seeing this girl everywhere. Here she comes around the corner of MLK and Normandie, trailing alongside me like we are friends.

“Soy Milagros de la bodega.”

“Hey.”

“Did you get my friend request?”

“Quit calling me Sonora. I answer to Sunny. And I have hundreds of friend requests, so it will take a couple weeks to get to you.”

She looks at me steadily, blankly, like a cow, staring me down with her one good eye and her off-kilter vibe. “Okay, Sunny. Tell Felipe I said hi,” she calls and, I swear, almost skips away.

“Yeah. See you around.”

The 757 bus pulls up, and it is packed. I'm jammed up against a fat guy in a Lakers jersey, a woman gripping two Jons grocery bags, and four chavas with fierce eyebrows and more piercings than me, then I transfer to a westbound 2 that lumbers from Barrio Aztlan to Thailandia through Little Armenia to Waspworld, I get off at the Sunset Five Theatre on Crescent Heights, and I nod to Mikela and Garrett on my way to the ladies' room.

Changed into my red Sunset Five uniform, I step out of the stall to face the mirror. In my stance, I jab advance, jab retreat, rocking a rhythm and breaking it up like Felipe is always talking about, mixing high hits to the skull with low blows to the solar plexus. Some lady enters, sees me, and quickly backs out, slamming the door behind her.

Milk white with forehead zits and spiky, green hair; two left and one right eyebrow stud; ear gauges, a septum ring; and two full sleeve spiderweb, tarantula, and skull tattoos that made Ma cry, the poster child for "Don't Fuck with Me" glares from the mirror. Crush that. Time to go bland and corporate, to fade away to nothing but a voice repeating: "I Want It All, theater seven on your right. Enjoy your film."

3

Ana Belen waits for me in her Toyota Tercel at one a.m.

"You look tragic." Blue circles ring her big, brown eyes.

"Thanks. Four hours O.T."

"Why can't Felipe pick me up?"

"You know why. Date with Elena."

"Getting banged again? He has a match in two weeks. Fighters are supposed to save it for the ring."

"The only one thinking about a ring is Elena. The one she

wants on her finger.”

We unlock the back door quietly to not wake Ma and Javier. Foraging in the fridge and checking my phone, I see yet another “friend request” from esa mema. Alright, you asked for it.

She replies almost instantly: Hey!

Wassup

Good. How are u?

Just got off work. U r persistent. Something on ur mind?

Just want to say hi 2 u & 2 ur brother

u seem so interested in him

No response.

He always talks 2 me about girls if I know a lil bit more bout u I could drop ur name

Thats so nice I was born in Torreon

face 2 face Can I come over?

now?

yes

its late

do u want to meet him or not

A half-hour later, I’m waiting on the threadbare carpet outside her apartment as she undoes at least eight locks to open the door. Her hair storms above her flowered nightie.

“Mi tía, she’s at work, but you can’t stay long. Just an hour, OK?” I nod solemnly. “Let me get you some flan!”

“I don’t really... Sí, gracias.”

We squeeze past a worn, white dresser into a tiny room that could belong to a twelve-year-old girl. A quilted, yellow blanket sprigged with flowers covers a twin bed; a zebra, lion, and mint green rabbit sit on the pillows, and family photos cover the walls. Jesus in soft focus with long, blond curls and a perfect goatee presides over it all.

After settling on her bed, I taste the flan. Warm vanilla and velvety rum fill my mouth, and I actually moan. Milagros grins and nods. “Do you know what this reminds me of?”

I’m so busy savoring another spoonful I don’t even answer.

“A kiss.”

“You’ve had a kiss.” It isn’t a question, just a mocking statement.

For the first time, I see something close to anger in her eyes.

“Yes, I’ve had kisses.”

“And who did you kiss?”

“A boy I knew in school.”

“A boy? How old are you?”

“I’m nineteen. How old are you?”

“I’m twenty-one. Felipe’s twenty-three. And he ain’t no boy.”

There is a lost look on her face.

“You can tell me anything. I’m his sister. And I can tell you what he likes. When he comes home from a date, who do you think he talks to?” We scrape our empty saucers with our spoons.

“So, what does he like?”

“Why should I tell you? You know all about it, right?”

“I just want to be sure.”

“He hates it when girls kiss with their mouths wide open, like some big, dead bacalao at the fish market.”

She laughs, but I say, “Serious. He likes a nice, tight kiss. With just a little bit of tongue. Like this.”

I lean in, take her square jaw in my hand, and pull her mouth to mine. She freezes a moment then squirms.

“Ey. I’m twying to show yooo.” I suck on her lower lip until her mouth slowly opens. After a long moment, she backs into the stuffed animals, one eye staring at me, the other eye taking in family photos, her palms outstretched, pushing air.

A stack of The Daily Word sits on her night stand. I pick one up and leaf through it. Her cheeks mottled, she stares down at her folded hands.

“He likes that?”

“Yeah. If you can do it right. And...”

“What?”

“You have a really nice body, but you need to...”

“What? I need to what?!”

“I don’t know... The way you dress... Get up.” She faces me, shoulders hunched, feet splayed.

“Don’t you have anything sexy?”

“I’m not ‘sposed to. I’m born again.”

“Well, he’s into sexy. Let’s see what you’ve got.”

We peer into her closet at elastic-waist skirts, t-shirts, and mom jeans. I shrug and say, "You better work on that kiss."

5

"Mi tesoro..." A marine glares at us from a picture frame. Milagros' nightie is hiked up, and her panties wrap around her ankles. My jeans are wadded up on the floor, and my sweatshirt shields the innocent eyes of her stuffed animals. "Sí, sí, mi amor, sí..." she shudders and sighs. Her eyes flutter open, the right, dull and aimless, the left, dark yet bright, and gleaming at me. She curls into a ball and whispers, "Tell me a secret, and I'll tell you a secret."

"What kind of secret?"

"A secret about Felipe."

"He snores like a pig."

"I don't believe you."

"Well, that's the truth. OK, my turn."

"What does he look like when he's sleeping?"

"Like everybody else when they sleep! He sleeps on his back with his mouth wide open and drool running down his chin. That's why he snores so bad."

"What does he dream?"

"The last dream he told me about was an earthquake. He's terrified of them. If we get hit by some little 3.5, he's a basket case for a week. My turn."

"My uncle dropped me," she says.

"Huh?"

"My uncle was carrying me. He dropped me, hurt my eye. By the

time they realized something was wrong, it was infected.”

“I’m sorry...Was this your first time?”

Her eyes flicker shut as she burrows down in the blankets. “My aunt will be home soon...”

I step outside under a lavender sky. It is still too dark to see my shadow. Pulling my trucker brim low, I look up at the windows but can’t tell which one is hers.

6

Tonight, Felipe is idling his ’98 Corvette in front of Sunset Five.

“Look who’s here. Lover boy.”

“Hey, I need a night off. She’s wearing me out.”

“Ay, pobrecito.”

Felipe swings left, away from Sunset’s colossal billboards and late-night traffic. “You been a little busy too. Where you been going at two, three in the morning?”

Shrug.

“I know you think you’re muy chingón, but you’re asking for trouble wandering around all hours of the night. Can’t you hang out at more civilized hours?”

“I work.”

“Then party on your days off. En serio. If we get some call about you from the emergency room, Ma will have a heart attack—”

“Lay off me.”

We ride down Western in silence until: “You ready for the fight?”

“What? The one with you?”

“Commerce Casino, güey.”

“Yeah, I’m ready. Bobby Cole, a kid from Dallas. Twenty-two years old, just moved up to welterweight.”

“You seen him fight?”

“’Course. Me and Jorge saw him beat Luis Aragon at Quiet Canyon, and we been watching his tapes. Jorge knows his trainer, Sammy Wilkins. Says Sammy’s pushing him too fast. You hanging out tonight?”

“Simón. Take a left here.”

Felipe drops me off at Milagros’ building, sighing as I get out and head up the walk.

“Just because you look scary don’t mean you are scary. Cuidado.”

7

“Could you bring me a picture? A picture of him from when he was little?”

“Milagros...”

We snuggle under her comforter and sip chocolate by the glow of her crucifix nightlight. I feel like I have gone back in time to the third-grade sleepovers with my best friend, Cassandra Murphy, until I was banished from her home for giving her a kiss.

“One picture. He must have been an adorable bebé.”

“He was a creep. My nephew Javier is cuter than he ever was.”

“Brother, mother, sister, nephew. You make me jealous.”

“Of what? Look at all the family you have.”

“Just pictures on a wall. I haven’t seen them in years. Only Fulvia cares. Never mind. I’m going to have my own family. A boy and two girls. We’ll name the girls Carina and Alicia.”

The crucifix nightlight fades to black, and Milagros rolls over, tumbling from the bed into free fall. She’s falling so fast that galaxies speed past her. Mr. Krantz, my senior year astronomy teacher, strolls over to me. “Vayo, what’s on the left?”

“A red dwarf star.”

“And how do you know that?”

“It’s brighter than a nightlight.”

“Thank you, Vayo. Extra butter with that popcorn.”

I roll over in bed, and sunlight tickles my eyelids. Beside me, Milagros is babbling, “¡Dios mío! Get up!”

We leap out of bed, fumbling for clothes and stumbling over each other.

At the front door, she turns to me. “Sonorita, I read in La Opinión Felipe has a fight coming up.”

“Are you sure?”

“Next Friday. We could go together.”

“He wouldn’t like that. It’s too violent.”

“Ask him, beg him. Don’t forget.”

I open the door to a key held in mid-air by a stocky, gray-haired woman who hops back and nearly screams.

“Tía Fulvia! Sonora, this is my aunt Fulvia—”

“Sonora. Mucho...gusto...” says Fulvia. She edges past me, hangs up her jacket, and sits down wearily in the Lazyboy, pulling

off her shoes. "Your friend is here at this hour?"

"We're going to church. Early service."

Fulvia reassesses me. "Muy bien. But you can't go dressed like that, mija. I have a faldita you can wear." She grimaces at my Timberlands. "And maybe you can fit my shoes."

8

"Thanks be to God for the gift of love. Love as varied as the flowers in a garden, as seashells on a beach..."

In Target Mary Janes, a long sleeve blouse, a head scarf, and a skirt, I hunch in a folding chair, hoping nobody recognizes me. The pastor, short, pink-faced, perspiring slightly, smiles at the handful of women, one old man, and kids scattered in the half-empty rows.

"The love of your friends, your brothers and sisters, your father, and God knows, your mother..." the pastor drones, and I can instantly feel Ma and Pop sitting a few rows behind me. The last time I attended church was my confirmation at Holy Family, and when I finally got out of there, I turned cartwheels in my white dress in front of the cathedral steps. Ma found out that Pop cut me a deal that if I got through confirmation, I wouldn't have to go to church anymore, and she didn't speak to either one of us for a week.

"Love is His greatest gift, and we glorify Him by giving and accepting it..." For a second, I think it's me he's looking at, but no, he's beaming at Milagros, who is snuffling and heaving sighs. His sermon, like every sermon I've ever heard, is half right. Aren't we supposed to give love equally? I always loved Pop best.

June two years ago, not long after I got fired from Target, I came home to an empty house and decided to celebrate with a blunt in the backyard. I had barely lit up when Don Juan Luis

Vayo Gomez rounded the corner. In his orange dockworker vest, the mustard hardhat in one hand, he sat down next to me and started in on: what do you think you are doing, why are you wasting all your potential, you are so smart, you are so talented, you are throwing it all away, that stuff ruins the brain, it messes up your memory—

I was so annoyed and bored that I just dropped: “Did you know I’m a lesbian?”

He said, “Yeah, I guess I knew that” and went right back to Just Say No, then finally eased up and started telling his old time L.A. stories: Helter Skelter, Ruben Salazar, The Clash at the Hollywood Palladium, growing up with his brothers and sisters and his cousin Esme, who he said I kind of favor.

By August, he was gone. An accident on his way to work.

If they could see me in church dressed like this, Ma would give one of her little smirks, and Pop would laugh his ass off.

Kids yell and run, and their mothers fold up chairs and stack them against the wall as the fluorescent lights go dark. Milagros says, “Let’s say hi to Pastor Gil.”

He is greeting worshipers at the door and blushes when he takes her hand. “Milagros! So good to see you.” He gives my hand a soft squeeze. “Welcome. We hope you come again.”

We head up Denker Avenue, and I look back to see Pastor Gil staring after us, confused and hungry, until a cantaloupe-shaped woman shakes his arm, demanding his attention.

9

“Padre celestial, venimos a ti...”

In a Commerce Casino dressing room, we hold hands as Ma prays, her eyes closed behind her glasses. She wears her violet dress

and silver lucky star pin.

Elena's eyes are also closed. My eyes travel from the stiletto sandals on her flawless feet, up her slim, caramel legs, to her shimmering, orange minidress. I hate her. Ana Belen and Ma don't like her either. They always give her identical, fake smiles.

"Thank you for blessing Felipe with talent and discipline, Señor. Guard him and guide him..."

Ma and Ana Belen hold Felipe's hands. They haven't been taped yet. Thick, short-fingered, with gleaming, half-moon nails and heavy wrists, they are formed from the same molten bronze as his abdominals and biceps. Ana Belen cut his hair and trimmed his goatee. He looks handsome and somber. Ready to go to work.

Jorge gives my hand a squeeze. I like Jorge. He won the IBF middleweight title in 1996. His hair has gone silver, and a huge scar forks from his scalp through his right eyebrow, but he's still got that rugged fighter's body.

Together we intone, "Amen." Elena shrink-wraps Felipe until he peels her off to speak with Ma and Ana Belen. Jorge leans toward me.

"What's up, killer?"

"Same ole same ole."

"You're wasting time, Sunny. You could go places."

"I am going places."

His gold tooth winks at me. "'Same ole same ole' ain't going nowhere. You got it, mija. You got that power, ese ánimo—"

"What are you two whispering about?" asks Ma.

"How lovely you look tonight, Esperanza."

“I see right through you, Jorge,” Ma snaps.

Felipe shows me his fists. “See this? This is scary.”

I roundhouse him in the bicep, he slugs me back, and we file out to let him get ready.

“Ohmygod, what a crowd,” says Elena, flipping her hair and swiveling in her seat to see who is scanning her. “Mrs. Pinel, you are so brave to watch Felipe fight.”

“I’ve just come to see my son win,” Ma says coolly.

“And what’s so brave about that?” Ana Belen seconds, crossing her long legs to give Elena a better view of her three-hundred-dollar Jimmy Choo slingbacks.

The announcer, from center ring and from two enormous, overhead screens, calls, “In this corner, in the green trunks, weighing in at 162 pounds, from Dallas, Texas, is Bobby ‘Cold Cash’ Cooooooooooooooooole!”

Café with a little leche and baby-faced, Bobby Cole salutes the crowd. A chorus of boos rises, and behind us, a woman shrieks, “Pinche MARICÓN – you FUCKER!” In triplicate, Cole shrugs and strolls to his corner.

The camera pans back to the announcer. “And in this corner, in the black trunks, weighing in at 168 pounds, from Los Angeles, California”—The crowd roars—“is Felipe ‘El Verdugo’ Vayoooooooooooooooo!”

On the big screens, Felipe’s heartbreaker smile crossfades to the titles: “SUNNY’S MESSED UP LOVE LIFE – MÁS PENDEJADAS POR SUNNY,” accompanied by a soundtrack: “Sí... sí, mi amor...”

Felipe and Bobby Cole smack gloves and back off, crouching behind their fists. “Así... así... Cuando tú me tocas así ... si suave... por favor...” whimpers Milagros. Felipe opens up with a high and low jab. Cole dodges, jabs, and sends a low, lead

hook that bounces off Felipe's forearm block. But up on the screens, there I am, on my knees, between her thighs, contemplated by the serene gaze of Jesus. "Me vuelves loca..." The neat, textbook moves have stopped, and Felipe and Cole thrash each other until they stumble into a clinch. The referee pulls them apart.

"Sí, FELIPE!" screams Elena. "Ay, Felipe..." moans Milagros. Suddenly I'm on my feet, trembling.

"Don't ever call me that again."

Felipe throws a jabjab and a high cross that Cole evades and answers with a lead shovel to the gut. Milagros looks up, dazed, her eyes more unfocused than usual. A high hook drills Cole in the ear so hard I feel the pain. We are all on our feet, hoarsely screaming. A man roars, "MÁTALO!" Kill him.

Cole staggers then drops behind a shell, his head and upper body barricaded by his forearms.

I imitate her whimper of "FelipeFelipeFelipe!" and then: "Felipe doesn't even know who the hell you are."

He backs Cole from ring center with a jab-feint-cross-shovel-hook. Cole does a Sugar Ray sidestep, and then slams back with a brutal, low, rear hook to the ribs.

Milagros struggles up from the tangled sheets, her right eye drifting further right and the left one blazing at me. "He loves me. And I'm going to see him at that fight."

"You can't do that."

"You're going to stop me?"

"Mami, there's nothing there! Forget it!"

"¡Put a marimacha!" I grab my jeans as she spits curses. "¡Sí, que se vaya, chingada!"

“Oh no,” breathes Ana Belen.

On two screens and in center ring, Felipe reels, blood pouring down his face. I didn't see what hit him, and apparently, neither did he. Ma's hands clutch the armrests, but her face is almost as expressionless as Bobby Cole's as she watches Felipe topple to the ground. Everyone says my brother gets his hígado from Pop, but Pop was a softie. That rock hard core comes from Ma.

I am yanking my sweatshirt over my head when Milagros tackles me, sobbing, “I'm sorry, por favor, perdóname, Sonora, Sunny...” I shove her away and straighten my clothes. I can still hear her calling, “I didn't mean it, I didn't mean...” when I shut the door.

10

I show up at Eddie Romero's at 5:30 sharp. The converted warehouse is painted sea green, and walking inside is like diving into a vast aquarium. Dior Sauvage, sweat, and Lysol float in the air. The evening crowd jumps rope, crunches sit-ups, pounds bags. A blue-haired chava curling free weights slides me an icy glance. Jorge is watching Felipe and some guy I don't know sparring in one of the rings.

“Mucho mejor. I'm seeing some focus now. Tomorrow, same place, same time.”

Felipe turns and stares. I'm in shorts and a tank top, carrying a head guard, chest protector, and gloves, and my eyebrow piercings are gone.

“I'm going to be working with Sunny,” says Jorge. “She wants to get serious.”

Felipe gives me a hard look. “Yeah...? Mind if I watch?”

“Go ahead.”

Walking home later that evening, we cross MLK, chugging ginseng sodas. I wait for the lecture, but all he says is, "What took you so long?"

"I thought you'd be pissed."

"Me? It's your life. Since when do you care what I think?"

"Ma won't be happy."

"Yeah, Ma's another story."

"You think you could tell her?"

Felipe starts laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"I wanted you to tell her I'm moving to Jorge's ranch in Eastvale."

"Where? Why?"

"Middle of nowhere. That fight was a disaster. I need to focus, and I can do that better at Jorge's."

"Esperanza Pinel Molina is going to lose her mind."

As we round the corner, we see Ma, Ana Belen, and Javier in our driveway. Felipe lets out a low whistle. Milagros is draped over the hood of his Cherry Lifesaver '98 Corvette.

She is candy too: Strawberry Jolly Ranchers, Red Vines, Atomic Fireballs, Red Hots. Her breasts peek over the crimson neckline of her cheap, silk dress, and she wears a black eye patch. A china platter of flan rests on one crossed thigh. Felipe frowns at her.

"Mami, what are you doing on my car?"

A Dodge Charger swerves around the corner and blasts past us. A chorus bellows, "Aaaaayyyy SEXY! VEN R-R-R-RICA! WAAAAAH!"

Milagros tosses her head, and a black flag unfurls.

“Look, get off my car. You’re going to scratch the paint.”

“I brought you flan. You like flan?” she purrs.

“Yeah. Please get off my car.”

Milagros plunges a finger into the creamy, golden pyramid, draws it out, and sucks it clean. Felipe watches with a crooked grin. I am dissolving like a half-eaten Tootsie Pop.

11

Around the table chime sighs and cries of pleasure. “¡Qué bueno!” “¡Sabroso!” “This is so good...”

Milagros gestures toward the eye patch and whispers, “Do you like it?”

“Uh yeah I yeah—”

“Muy sexy, mami.” Felipe gives Milagros a smoldering wink. Her cheeks flame as a fist clenches my heart.

“I know not everyone likes to share recipes,” ventures Ma.

Milagros blushes like a virgin on a botánica candle. “I would love to give you my recipe. I have so many. I love to cook.”

“You are lucky,” says Ana Belen, licking her spoon. “I can’t cook to save my life.”

“But she can cook to end a life,” cracks Felipe.

“Mom, tell her about the time you started the kitchen on fire!” Javier guffaws, and they join him.

“Cállate,” snaps Ana Belen. Javier does quiet down as he studies the eye patch, and then blurts, “That’s so cool. Where’d you get that?”

"Don't be rude," warns Ma.

"No, it's OK ... Did you hear about the big, 2016 earthquake in Mexico?"

The left eye gleams, turns heavenward, lowers, and drops a tear. Her hands press to her heart and flutter around a story of martyrdom: her rescue of an infant cousin in a collapsed building, a falling beam knocking her unconscious, the injury of her eye. She lifts her hands in a benediction, and I almost expect to see stigmata.

"Tía Fulvia says I am Milagros de verdad." They all chuckle.

"Let's go for a walk," I order.

"Oh, this is so nice. Let's just have more flan." She doesn't even look at me.

"I'll go with you," says Felipe, and Milagros bounces out of her chair. She glows, I burn, and Felipe is his usual cool, calm self as we step into the night. Palm trees line our street of faded apartment buildings and Sweet-Tart colored bungalows. Kids race past on scooters.

"Isn't it a beautiful night?" sighs Milagros. I could choke her.

Bad Bunny rumbles from Felipe's pocket, and he reaches for his phone. Scanning the text, he pulls his face into a mask of woe. "I've got to run. Previous engagement. Ladies, I'm going to ask for a rain check. Nice meeting you, mami."

Milagros stands on tiptoe, leaning after the disappearing Corvette like it pulls her with an invisible cord.

"We could walk to Café Tropical, get some coffee."

She glances at me with that one miraculous eye. I could be a stranger telling her the time.

“It’s late. I better get home. I’ll check you tomorrow.
‘Night, Sunny.”

She sashays off, head high, hem fluttering, stilettos clikclikcliking away from me. Halfway down the block, she passes the Nieves brothers playing dominoes on their porch. They wolf whistle and “Aaaaaaayyy...” At the corner, she turns left and disappears.

What else can I do? Like any lovesick pendejo, I follow her.