

*The viejo called them
“Las Arras,” that
gift he said a groom
gives to his bride...*

He said the boda was his own and that he was to be married that very night. He called his bride by the name of Santa Muerte, though he said that even those of his own tradition would never call Death a saint. The boy said he believed that all holy people were saints, both the living and the dead, and the viejo smiled and said he would miss the boy and his youth and his wisdom.

Then the viejo turned to the caja. It was dark and beautifully carved. A wooden lazo, a replica of those draped around a groom and his bride in that country of old, wrapped its way around the sides of the caja, and everywhere about the caja, images of the cempasúchiles flowered like a wooden garden that had grown up to embrace it.

The viejo opened the caja, and the boy saw thirteen golden coins lying in a red velvet bed. The viejo called them “Las Arras,” that gift he said a groom gives to his bride representing the Christ and the Twelve Apostles of the Christ—that gift an honorable groom must give if he ever wishes to entrust himself to his bride and her love.

The boy stood looking at Las Arras, and the viejo softly shut the caja. He said that he would marry his bride in her yard that very night, and that the next time the boy would see him, he would be taking her to his home in his cart. The boy began shaking his head and backing away. He said he did not believe it and that he would pray for the viejo. But the viejo only smiled and slapped his burro and put his cart forward.

“Vaya con Dios, joven,” the viejo said in his threadbare suit.

“¡No lo creo!” the boy said, crying after the dark. “¡No lo creo y oro por usted! ¡Oro por usted!”

Ryan Rising lives in Kansas. His fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in *Shenandoah*, *African American Review*, *The Doctor T. J. Eckleburg Review's Salon*, *In Parentheses*, and Red Ochre Press' *Category 2: Installment One*, a literary fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Sandy.

JOE HYATT

El Catrín, 2004
mixed media (gouache/pastel/pencil), 30 x 20 in

El Diablito, 2003
mixed media (gouache/pastel/pencil), 30 x 20 in



courtesy: the artist

