

JOE HYATT

La Muerte, 2003

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



courtesy: the artist

RYAN RISING Las Arras

The night was heavy and cavernous. Like the underworld must be with all the weight of the weary pressing down upon it. The old man passed the little gringo in the old cart the boy had helped him repaint. The viejo wore the only suit he ever owned, old and thin from another age, and he carried in his cart two bottles of mezcal, a sack full of sugar skulls, countless marigolds, and an ornate box far beyond his means.

“¿Adónde va, viejo?”

The viejo pulled up his burro. He looked at the night and then at the boy. “A dos tumbas y una boda.”

The boy looked in the cart. He asked if the packages were for el Día de los Muertos, and the viejo said that they were. The viejo said the bottles of mezcal were for his brother, a brave man who had died long ago fighting next to el Héroe Villa in the Battle of Celaya. The calaveras de azúcar were for his niece who had died as soon as she had been born into this visible world, and the many cempasúchiles he would lay across the tumbas of his brother and niece that their graves not go undecorated and without honor before the eyes of the living and the dead.

“¿Y la madre de su sobrina—”

“Está muerta.”

The boy looked at the viejo, but the viejo said nothing.

The boy turned back to the cart. “¿Y la caja?”

The viejo did not answer.

“¿Es la caja para la boda?”

“Sí. Para la boda.”

“¿De quién es la boda?”

The viejo looked back at his burro.

“Viejo. ¿De quién es la boda?”

“No es para los corazones de los jóvenes,” he said. He slapped his burro with the reins and started the cart, but the boy ran and grabbed his leg.

“Viejo, por favor. ¿De quién es la boda? ¿Y qué hay en la caja? Dígame, por favor. Dígame.”

The viejo sighed and said the young should not seek that which their heart cannot hold. The boy said that though he was young in age, he was old in heart, and that he had been baptized in the river just last week. The viejo nodded and said they did not partake of the same altar, and that even if the boy was indeed old of heart, he would not understand. Nevertheless, he agreed to tell the boy about the boda and the caja.