

VANESSA MARSH

Landscape 35, from the series
Everywhere All at Once, 2016

Archival print from photogram negative, 40 x 40 in



COURTESY DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

ALICIA PLANTE

Murder of a Different Stripe

(excerpts from
a novel in progress)

From the opposite corner of the living room, El Gallego stared at him intently. He pretended to turn away, crossed and uncrossed his legs, and looked at him again: no, there was no doubt about it, for some reason El Gallego was watching him. That corner of the room was half in shadow, contrasting with the stream of light that fell on him and Daniel through the transom of the front door, isolating them from the rest. Surely that was the reason he hadn't noticed. But how long had El Gallego been staring at him in that strange way, and why? He watched an old woman who looked like a relative take a seat on the couch next to El Gallego and lean forward to whisper something to him, possibly imagining that the old man couldn't hear her. And he must have felt something: those penetrating eyes, squinting as though they were counting the money in his pocket, must have been sending him some kind of message, because suddenly he turned his head right in El Gallego's direction. It was odd, he thought, for El Gallego to be scrutinizing him so closely, because he had always ignored him, and besides, today his house was full of people he probably never saw. Wakes always had a way of turning into a final, polite gesture on the part of the deceased, who generously offered themselves as an excuse for people to conceal their fear of death by talking nonsense. He didn't go over to the casket, not out of fear, but rather because of an uneasiness he'd never been able to shake completely. Besides, El Gallego's wife had always been a remarkably ugly woman, and surely death hadn't improved her. And if it was a question of unattractive displays, his bathroom mirror every morning was more than enough.

He averted his eyes and focused once more on Daniel: he really did look quite distraught at his mother's death. He clearly remembered him pedaling his tricycle on the opposite sidewalk, the boy's body bent over the handlebars as if he were running a race against life. Sometimes, as he crossed the street to catch the bus to high school, he would make Daniel laugh by pretending to be afraid of an enormous approaching vehicle that threatened to run him over. The boy's towheaded, childhood mane had darkened, and yet, he thought, it was the same today as back when it had dangled charmingly over his blue eyes. A good-looking kid, Daniel, skinny and quick as a young cat, with a white, toothy smile and an unexpectedly deep voice. Raúl heard