

at the overlook and drank my beer there. Looking down at the divide between Juarez and El Paso, marked by the concrete channel that used to be a great river, hemmed in for its own good, I took in the dimensions of this new Mundo. There wasn't anyone around, so I walked to the crags at the edge with my brew and in the waning red of sunset, took out the gun and aimed it directly at the point where I thought my house was. Somewhere out there, an invisible bullet was streaking through the window and into the heart of a dope who still saved all his monster fan magazines.

Night fell and I was still on the crag. All the beer was drunk and the air suddenly cold. And still nobody there. I wanted to talk to someone, to demonstrate my deft handling of this firearm, to declare to *la gente* what a badass *cabrón* I had been in the park. I needed them to see how different I was now. But nobody came. Occasionally, headlights would approach, then ease on past. I sat on the hood of my Gremlin crunching up the beer cans and getting pissed. I tried to listen to the radio but the songs weren't about her anymore. I took a whiz on a rock and slung Spanish curses at the lights of the cities below and the black monolith mountain behind. Then I put that cold *pinchi cuete* right up against my cheek and cried. I cried at the injustice of Lisa Morales. How could she go back to that guy? How could she be mad at me after all we'd shared? Doesn't she see that it's me she wants? Then in the pitch blackness, I heard

She don't.

What?

She don't see it.

No, huh?

You have make her see it.

Should I?

About time, Mundo.

I wiped the snot off my face and got in my car. My hands shivering on the wheel. My teeth rattling. The whole time the gun was humming some song. I don't know what song. It was pretty, though, and sad. When I got to Lisa's house, the gun said to park it around the block. So I did. Then I walked all casual up to her house and almost knocked, but the gun said not to. It said to go around the side to her window, or don't I know which room is hers? I said I did and I went. I looked in her window and there

was Lisa, sitting on the floor talking on the phone to a friend. Or maybe the guy, said the gun.

Yeah, maybe him.

Bet he's got his zipper down.

Probably does.

She's gonna see him soon.

Yeah. At ten.

You can put a stop to that.

I should too.

So what are you waiting for?

How?

You know how, *loco*.

You mean, this?

You got it.

I looked down at the gun and it felt so light now. All that weightiness of before was gone. It almost billowed in my hand. I raised it gently in the air till my arm made a straight line between my right eye and hers. My heart was stamping in my chest.

Mundo means world, I said.

That's right.

I am the world.

The whole world.

All the time in the world. That's what she said.

Yes she did, murmured the gun.

I nodded and slowly lowered my arm. I stepped back from the window and let my weak legs carry me back to the car. I put the gun in the glove box and drove home. Somewhere along the way, I threw up all over myself but I stayed focused on the sudden vividness of everything. The oil refinery along Trowbridge lit up at night shimmered like a crystal palace through my tears. I came home to a dark and quiet house, took a shower, and lay awake in bed for hours after, deaf to everything but the long wail of the Southern Pacific rolling in. That and the comforting snores of my Mom sleeping.

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Next morning Louie-Louie pulled up and found me cleaning out my Gremlin. He didn't even shut off the engine. He sat in his car with those sunglasses on and summoned me with his smile. I threw the rag in the pail and popped open the glove box, took out his .45 wrapped in crisp newsprint, and put it right in his waiting hands.

PETER PAONE

Swing, 2014

Watercolor on paper, 30 x 22 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST