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EX SITU CANIS LATRANS

TLAHUELPUCHI

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Tlahuelpuchi is a vampire born before linear time, when blood sacrifice was a ritual that gave pulse to the cosmos, and jade pearls dangled on the chest of those said to rule the center of the universe. Tlahuelpuchi was born to the people who sweep quetzal feathers with makeshift brooms.

Tlahuelpuchi is a solitary vampire that haunts the rural towns of southern Mexico, she reads Quevedo and Vargas Llosa, makes her own resin copal incense, and raises condors as pets to help consume the food scraps she leaves behind.

Of whatever humanity she has left, her remorseful moral conscience only allows her to hunt and devour those that cause harm. Her only true real sin is stealing cloves from food stalls to rub the gums of her mouth when new fangs perforate her jaw.

Tlahuelpuchi takes pleasure in having a body without an expiration date, but during bouts of depression and anxiety brought on by her own



immortality, she cuts her own tongue to taste her blood containing a current of old chthonic wisdom and to speak and be consoled by the voices that came before her.

She hunts by cutting her finger to draw out blood, placing it on the ground, and feeding her blood to a rhizomatic network of mycelium that spreads for hundreds of kilometers all over the soil. In this symbiosis, the mycelium in turn leads her to where it feels Tlahuelpuchi's victim's feet pressing above its system of tangled tendrils above the ground. Once the prey is located by the mycelium, she turns into a bat to use echolocation and fly over the swooshing canopy of trees concealing its prey. Moments before the skin of her victim raptures and the blood vessels turn into a current of bloodletting that fall down to the ground for the mycelium to also feast in. Tlathuelpuchi turns into mist; to quickly, and privately without any recording, enmesh its catch.



Hearing over an old radio on a house a few kilometers away, the news that Mexico only sends "its bad hombres, its rapists, and individuals that commit crimes to America". Tlahuelpuchi decides to head to the USA, under the impression that her prey, "those that cause harm" have moved up north.

Upon reaching Ciudad Juarez, she's faced with a barrier, that in order to enter a space, as a vampire, she must be invited in. So she hires a Coyote to smuggle her in.

This newly hired Coyote, never having smuggled a vampire himself, asks his cousin for advice. His cousin, Estela works at the *maquila* packing medical supplies into styrofoam and then to cardboard boxes. Estela has the brilliant idea of putting Tlahuelpuchi's bat form inside the styrofoam of one of the boxes, but fearing that they might get caught by the x-rays that scan the semi trailers' freight, she forgoes the idea. But Tlahuelpuchi then suggests that she can turn into mist, and easily fit into the small styrofoam box.



Tlahuelpuchi then becomes a fine mist, and transforms into what looks like a vaping cloud a millennial might have ebbled out of his mouth. The Coyote uses both of his hands to gather the fine mist and places it inside the styrofoam. Here, fine columns of mist tangle, knot and disappear as

Tlathuelpuchi is nothing but a specter self contained inside the styrofoam.

Bound for El Paso carrying Tlathuelpuchi snug tight in pallets of medical supplies wrapped in plastic, the eighteen wheeler leaving the *maquila* just before 10 p.m., is met on the opposite side of the road by the white school buses having just picked up all those night shift workers about to clock in inside the same *maquila*.

The bus picks up the workers who live on the outskirts of Juarez, where the roads are unpaved, and the electricity only runs for a couple of hours each day. The people inside the bus are all chatting, excited to see one another, others with lunch boxes neatly seated at their laps are quietly praying for the sons and daughters that leave the house knowing they won't be back until 6 a.m.



The truck carrying Tlahuelpuchi arrives on the other side at 1 a.m, before the corrugated doors of the warehouse roll open, before the men who are supposed to unload the cargo at 5 a.m., and before the wives of those men wake up to make them breakfast with groggy eyes and *lagañas* dry on their face. The women, cranky but with loving support, see them drive out of the driveway and onto an empty highway that leads to a warehouse filled with too many incandescent lights.

Around 4 a.m, Tlahuelpuchi edges herself out of the latched door of the trailer as a fine and hazy film of pearly mist, so dense it immediately falls down to the ground. She spreads out as nothing but colorless vapor into the empty solace of the desert. Wisps of herself rise up into the morning night sky that will soon be shrouded by the sun. At this hour, the star speckled sky is reserved for those who clean subways and office buildings ahead of the bustle of cars and sounds of coffee dripping into containers they will soon clean out of the way.

