

NIGHT TERROR MAGAZINE

NO. 16
SEPT
2025

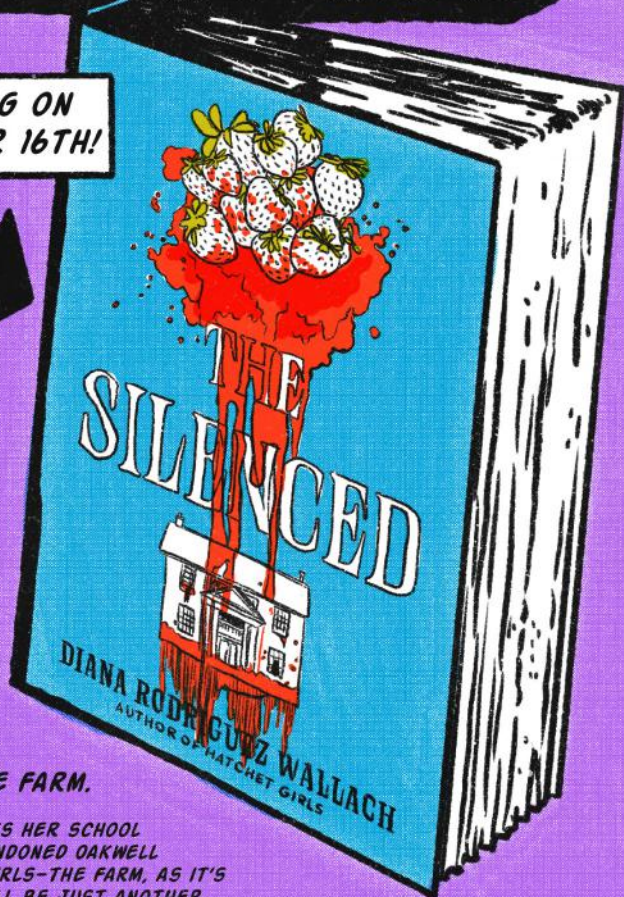
A NEW SOURCE FOR
ALL THE CREATORS
IN YOUR HORROR
COMMUNITY

THE CUCUY ISSUE

HAUNTING! ENTHRALLING! SPIRITED!

DIANA RODRIGUEZ WALLACH'S
THE SILENCED

RELEASING ON
SEPTEMBER 16TH!



WELCOME TO THE FARM.

HAZEL PEREZ THINKS HER SCHOOL PROJECT ON THE ABANDONED OAKWELL FARMS SCHOOL FOR GIRLS—THE FARM, AS IT'S KNOWN TO LOCALS—WILL BE JUST ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT. BUT AFTER A LATE-NIGHT RESEARCH TRIP ENDS WITH HER FALLING UNCONSCIOUS, SHE AWAKENS WITH A DESIRE FOR REVENGE THAT ISN'T HER OWN.

DESPERATE TO FREE HERSELF FROM THESE SUDDEN VIOLENT URGES—AND THE HAUNTING VISIONS OF AN UNKNOWN GIRL SHE SEES IN THE MIRROR—HAZEL DECIDES TO INVESTIGATE. AS SHE DELVES DEEPER INTO OAKWELL FARMS' PAST, HAZEL DISCOVERS THE HARROWING EXPERIENCES OF THE GIRLS WHO WERE ONCE FORCED TO LIVE UNDER THE WATCH OF SINISTER MEN AND ENCOUNTERS THE SPIRITS WHO STILL LINGER THERE. WITH THE HELP OF SOME UNLIKELY ALLIES, HAZEL MUST NAVIGATE A TREACHEROUS PATH OF CORRUPTION, HISTORY, AND THE SUPERNATURAL TO BRING PEACE TO THE RESTLESS SPIRITS AND LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT HER FAMILY'S INVOLVEMENT.

Night Terror Magazine Mission Statement

The foundation of *Night Terror Magazine* amplifies underrepresented voices in horror. Authors, artists, creatives, and enthusiasts make up this incredible community, and it's our mission to provide a platform to encompass the creative sphere. *Night Terror* supports the artistic liberation of self-publishing and empowers independent creators in the horror genre.

"Tales to keep you waking in the night!" The Editor-In-Chief's Note

When Kelsee and I were talking about what to do for the cover of this month's issue, we kept getting hung up on the dark nature of the current times. *Night Terror Magazine* is, in many ways, a political publication. What ideas do we want out there that not only hold weight amid the devastation sweeping through Latino communities but also make a bold statement?

In many Latin American cultures, the monarch butterfly represents transformation and messages from ancestors. They are a spiritual embodiment of the souls who have departed, bringing together the living and the dead. The monarchs' incredible voyage from Canada and the U.S. to Mexico often coincides with *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), a time of remembrance and celebration. The monarch has also become a symbol for the right of all living beings to move freely. Like the butterfly, human beings cross borders in search of safer habitats, and because of this, the monarch has become a symbol of support for the migrant community in Latin America.

When Kelsee's partner, a Mexican-American and son of immigrants, suggested that we highlight joy over grief, Kelsee created this month's moving cover with an image of the beloved monarch, representing the celebration of life amid grief and hardship. However, she did so while also featuring the imagery of *La Lechuza* as a vision of power. *La Lechuza* refers to the Mexican folklore of a witch who can transform into a barn owl. She seeks revenge on those who've wronged her and those who commit misdeeds. In the cover image, the figure below the monarch and owls conjures strength from both to empower them.

Latino Heritage Month lands heavy this year. We continually watch communities fight for safety and basic human rights. Horror exists in many forms; violence isn't always loud. It is a shape-shifting, ongoing threat, often taking the form of neglect, silence, and dehumanizing headlines.

In the midst of all this turmoil, there is tremendous power in honoring traditions and the cultural pride of these communities. The art of resilience shows up in many ways, including sharing stories and experiences as they are intended to be told. In this month's issue of *Night Terror Magazine*, our guests share what being Latino means to them and the many emotions they carry through their artistic processes – all through the lens of the heritage that has shaped them into the incredible creators they are.

We are honored to be a home for these contributions and hope you'll join us not only in celebrating Latino Heritage Month but also in uplifting these communities, especially in a tumultuous time that requires our attention and immediate action.

Our love always!
Elli

Elli Wade, Editor-In-Chief
[@yourspookymom](#)



Elli is a horror junkie through and through. Her brand, *Your Spooky Mom*, focuses on bringing attention to indie horror authors both big and small.

Kelsee Thomas, Creative Director
[@kellsweetie](#)



Kelsee is an artist, content creator, and born again book nerd, continuing to confuse the masses with her bright illustrations and dark book tastes. Constantly in search of the question, "Where are the Black girls reading horror/weird girl lit?"

Brittney Norton, Copy Editor
[@britnortonreads](#)



Brittney is an avid horror fan and constant reader who is always letting us know where to put commas, and when she's not doing that, she's a PhD student analyzing and translating Old English manuscripts through the lens of Modern-Day Horror.

Bajo las Sombras del Sol

The Movement of Los Góticos and the Influence of Mexico's Oscura Scene

by Elli Wade, edited by Brittney Norton

Mexico is a nation that traditionally embraces death as a natural part of life. Many of us are familiar with Día de los Muertos, a two day-long celebration of the dearly departed through traditional dress, music, and community. Social injustice, political violence, and cultural hardship have been recognized through the poeticness of suffering, the darkness of death, and a desire to push against oppressive systems. These rich cultural celebrations and traditions have fostered the birth of radical punk and gothic scenes, and the rise of this defiant subculture has created profound cultural connections in Mexico.

During the mid-1980s, the underground music scene was beginning to thrive in Mexico. While the history seems to be a bit limited here, there are a few sources noting 1982 as being a quintessential time. Musicians Neto (also known as Ernesto "Fuzz On" Martinez) and his wife, Tere Farfista, were pioneers for the emerging garage scene in Mexico—both selling UK's incredible goth influence to the area through new accessibility to records such as Joy Division and The Cure.

With the rapidly evolving political climate, there existed an urgent need to create space for suffering, spirituality, and expressing emotions in a society where culture was emotionally suppressive. Thereafter, Mexican rock groups such as Caifanes and Santa Sabina began to integrate darker themes into their music. While these musicians didn't consider themselves to be "goth," they did develop an aesthetic that was widely adopted by the underground scene.

There were sprinklings of the lifestyle in the '80s, but half a decade later, the movement really kicked off. El Clan, whose first album *Sin Sentir* was released in 1994, has been regarded as Mexico's dark scene representatives, playing a truly gothic style of music. Shortly after, an American band, London After Midnight, played in Mexico City. Many refer to this as an historical moment that formalized Mexico City's Oscura Scene (MCOS).

Los Góticos in Mexico utilized this movement to make a bold statement regarding identity, resistance, and survival. Many members of the scene were from working-class areas, and black attire, dark makeup, and nights spent in underground clubs provided more than music but a com-



munity. The underground was both an escape route and an embrace of a unique beauty amidst a brutal, violent world.

Mexico and its people hold space for the dramatic and the sorrowful, from the soul-baring ballads to the gut-wrenching telenovelas. One might say that the aesthetic melancholy is a cultural trait among these identities. Los Góticos became a canvas where sadness was transformed into expressive art. As one Reddit user put it during a discussion on Mexico's darkwave scene: We love heartbreak and despair; it's in our DNA.

Clubs such as Gato Calavera and markets such as El Chopo serve as indispensable meeting grounds. El Chopo is particularly seminal—a punk, goth, alternative, and metal exchange market that has been alive and thriving in Mexico City since the late '80s. These are hubs for collective support of political expression and social consciousness. A great deal of support and unity though these collective identities serve as stewards to a more community-focused nature, pushing against the grain of harmful political ideologies.

Mexico's gothic and metal scenes aren't just local favorites; they are defining voices of the genres in their own right. Among the standouts are:

Anabantha: This gothic metal band, founded in the late '90s, blends operatic vocals with ominous riffs. It's been recognized by Mexico's national arts council and holds a cult following across Latin America.

Trágico Ballet: Originating from Guanajuato, this band crafts sweeping gothic rock with lyrics that dive into death, heartbreak, and the supernatural. Over time, they've evolved from classic romantic goth into a more theatrical and experimental sound.

Morante: This group leans heavily into fantasy and horror. Their songs

teem with ghosts, demons, and medieval lore, giving them the feel of a gothic RPG soundtrack set in colonial-era Mexico.

Fractalia: A newer presence in the scene, Fractalia mixes doom, progressive, and dark rock with a contemporary edge. Their sound draws influence from classic European goth while embracing distinctively Mexican storytelling.

Mexico's alternative communities are far from fading. In a media hellscape dominated by pop princess billionaires, true innovation continues to brew in the underground. The DIY space, across many cultures, has always been a beautiful home for alternative identities to thrive. But it's not only music that thrums within these catacombs. Zines are built and festivals are held; it is the home of weekly markets and safe spaces to organize. It's a place where non-conformity, queerness, performance, and raw emotion are welcomed.

Today's bands are fusing gothic music with shoegaze, industrial, synthpop, doom, techno, and local cultural influences. While the internet has played a big role in this evolution, physical communities remain vital: darkwave dance events in Guadalajara, goth-metal festivals in Monterrey, and the enduring heartbeat of El Chopo in Mexico City.

Through the use of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, younger generations in Mexico are embracing goth style, blending it with indigenous symbolism, Catholic imagery, and anti-capitalist rebellion. With the continual threats and violence at the border, these unified communities are a means of survival. Los Góticos have created something uniquely beautiful for themselves—a haven where grief and rage are held and transformed. In the glow of red, flashing lights and the hum of distortion, there is a true and foundational belonging in these communities. Music is, at its core, community—a shield fierce, defiant, and necessary.

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"Fuzz on!"

Grupo Milenio

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Want some jams while you read?

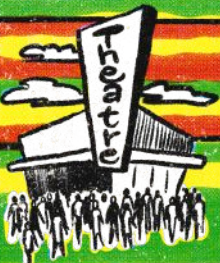
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzzds-jxcHJk>



MIKEY PERALTA JR

HORROR MOVIE HOUR



SHOWING

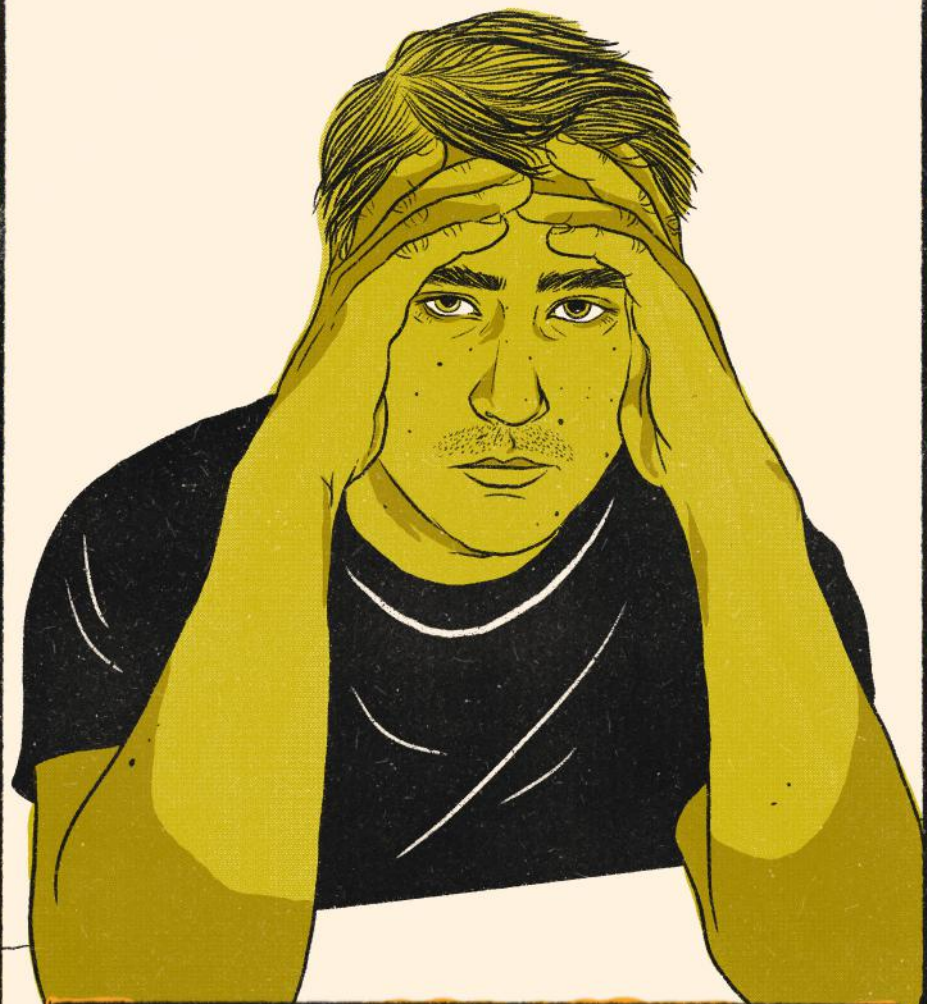
ON TIKTOK!

RECOMMENDING LATIN AMER.

AND POC HORROR FILMS!

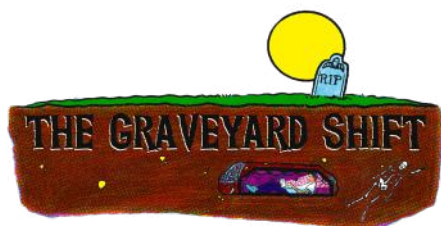


MAKE SURE TO
CHECK OUT
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FOR SOME OF
THE BEST
HORROR FILM
RECS!



a guest feature from
A.P. THAYER

A. P. THAYER IS A QUEER MEXICAN-AMERICAN WRITING CROSS-GENRE SPECULATIVE FICTION IN LOS ANGELES. HIS WORK HAS APPEARED IN PLACES SUCH AS UNCHARTED MAGAZINE, DARK MATTER MAGAZINE, NEON HEMLOCK ANTHOLOGIES, AND OTHERS.



Que Viene El Coco

by A.P. Thayer, edited by Brittney Norton

"I told you to clean your room," says the mother, exasperation in her voice.

The little boy squirms in bed, gearing up for one of his customary tantrums. A tried and true defense against all attempts at discipline.

"I'll do it in the morning," he says, knowing he'll put it off until at least the afternoon, if not the day after tomorrow. He's learned how to take advantage of his mother's busy schedule.

His mother shakes her head. She's too tired to argue. There's a pile of laundry to fold still. "Fine. I'm going to go tell El Coco how you're misbehaving."

The child gasps, and the bedroom door clicks closed, plunging him into darkness, a darkness that grows with hungry shadows that creep toward his bed. A darkness as deep as the void but for the glowing red eyes peering out at him from his closet.

He screams, but it is too late. El Coco has come for him.

In the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking corners of the world, there exists a mythological boogeyman—a shapeshifter who eats children. Sometimes, this creature is a skull, other times a disgusting pile of matted fur and glowing eyes. Some

Brazilian tales say the creature takes the form of whatever a child finds most horrific. In Mexico, it is a creature that hides in a child's closet or under their bed, waiting to take them away if they misbehave. This monster goes by many names: Cucuy, Coca, Cuca... or, as I knew it, El Coco, as so named in the lullaby my mother would sing to me.

*Duérmete niño, duérmete ya,
Que viene el Coco y te comerá.*

For those not fluent in Spanish, this roughly translates to, "Go to sleep, go to sleep now, 'cause otherwise the Coco will eat you."

While some children might shrink from this threatening song, I never did. After all, my mother's discipline was far scarier than some nursery rhyme. The discipline was real. If anything, this song made me feel cozy and safe. She sang it with love. The threatening words barely registered. It was an intangible part of my Mexican heritage, and it only ever brought me comfort; El Coco was never more than a cartoonish villain hiding in shadows before popping its head out to say boo while everyone laughed.

I'm now well and grown, and my mother still sings this lullaby. Not to me, of course, but I have seen her pick up a small dog (much to their alarm), flip it upside down to cradle it like a baby, and sing this lullaby while rocking the dog in a less-than-gentle manner. Her love has always been aggressive like that.

I grew up the child of a diplomat and moved around Europe. It was amazing to live in places such as Edinburgh and Madrid, but flight distance meant visits to the Americas were limited. I traveled to Guadalajara to see my grandparents and cousins no more than a handful of times before I was ten. The folkloric tales I became familiar with were more Brothers Grimm and less *tlahuelputchi*¹ and *lechuza*². My

mother became the primary source for my Mexican identity. She spoke to me only in Spanish so that I would be bilingual, fed the family Mexican food with European ingredient substitutes, and sang to me about El Coco.

As I grew, El Coco did not grow with me. This boogeyman fell to the wayside, forgotten as teenage hormones raged. It wasn't until much later, in the unlikely place—George Lopez's *Why You Crying?* comedy special—that El Coco reemerged, this time as a cultural in-joke I almost missed: "Latinos don't go down the hall to get a blanket because the fucking Cucuy is in the closet." It made me curious. Who was El Cucuy? Why was there such a seemingly similar boogeyman to El Coco? It didn't take long to realize El Cucuy and El Coco were one and the same.

Like many other things in Latin America, different names are used in different regions. Ask a Mexican, a Boricua, and a Colombian what word they use for a straw, and you'll see. Despite having different names, however, a version of El Coco is known throughout the American continents. This Iberian tale crossed the Atlantic during the colonization of the so-called New World and, like many other colonizer customs, planted roots in the colonies. From there, it borrowed from Indigenous and African beliefs, eventually becoming a widespread creature of folklore.

In a way, my journey of self-identity mirrored that trans-Atlantic journey. As a Mexican-American raised mostly in Europe, I, too, cross-pollinated cultures and put down roots when I returned to America. I've experienced firsthand how culture can both clash and morph. Like El Coco, my identity took the shape of what fit best for where I was living, often neglecting my Mexican culture. That neglect lingered until college when, for the first time, I was surrounded by a culture that reflected—if incompletely—an identity more welcoming to my Latinidad.

Over the last fifteen years, I have continued to explore my Latinidad. I've had more to draw from than a nursery rhyme and a comedy special. These days, more often than not, I am the one teaching my mother about our culture and heritage. I'm the one finding out where our family comes from and working to identify what type of indigenous blood runs through our veins.

El Coco began as a shadowy threat beneath the bed, a creature my mother sang about to rock me into uneasy peace. Years later, I learned that this shapeless monster had a name, a lineage, and a place in the larger story of my people. What was once meant to frighten me instead became a bridge—between Europe and Mexico, between comedy and tradition, between my mother's aggressive love and my own hesitant belonging. In the end, El Coco did not devour me. It gave me back a self I hadn't yet claimed.

¹A vampire legend from the Yucatan peninsula

²A shapeshifting owl creature from central and northern Mexico

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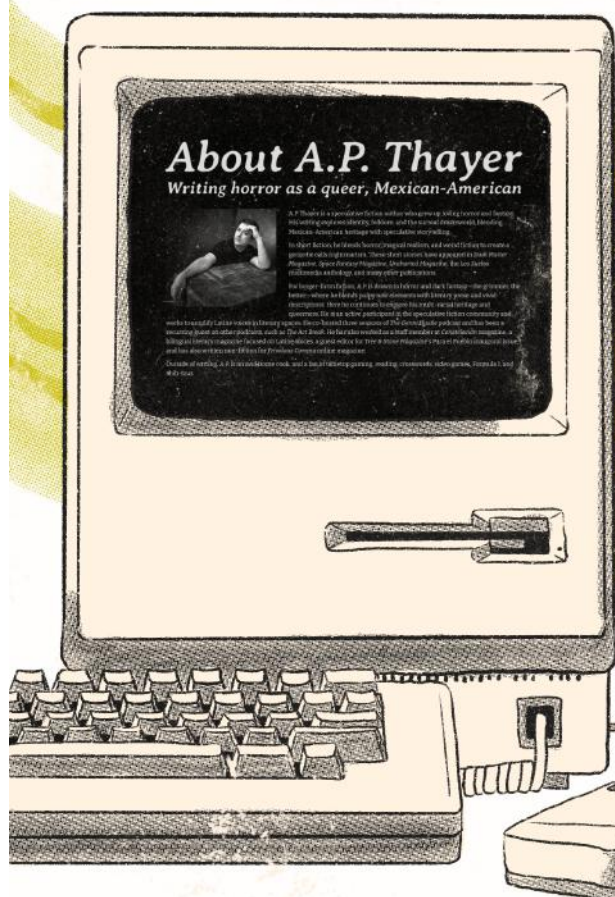
Why You Crying?

Performance by George Lopez

Directed by Marty Callner

HBO, 2004.

Want to read more by **A.P. Thayer?**



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APTHAYER.COM



final fmc, a tbr game by **BOW'S BOOKS**

BOW IS A MILLENNIAL HORROR LOVER LIVING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WITH HER FAMILY. HER HOBBIES INCLUDE READING, WATCHING HORROR MOVIES, AND PLAYING GAMES. SHE LOVES ANYTHING THAT GIVES HER NOSTALGIA WHICH MEANS, IF IT'S FROM THE '80S TO EARLY 2000S, SHE IS MOST LIKELY GOING TO BE INTO IT! FAVORITE COLOR: BLACK. FAVORITE FOOD: MOM'S ENCHILADAS. FAVORITE HORROR MOVIE KILLER: IMPOSSIBLE TO ANSWER BUT I'LL SAY ART THE CLOWN FOR NOW.



Objective

In *Final FMC*, you are the Final Girl. Travel around the board using a 6-sided die to land on killer, weapon, victim, and location spaces. You will need these to draw cards for your reading prompts. There may also be a few plot twists along the way. Will you defeat the killer, or will you be another victim for their body count? This is a game for readers wanting a fun way to pick out what they will read for the next month. Reading the books you choose will determine whether your Final Girl survives.

The Inspiration

Bow started watching horror films with her mom at a very young age, when VHS reigned supreme and DVDs were not a thought yet. Trips to Hollywood Video were the highlight of her week.

Fast forward to 2025 when she discovered the book community and the existence of TBR games on Booktube. TBR stands for "to be read," and a TBR game is played to help you determine which books to read.

Bow fell in love because it combined two of her favorite things - reading and

games. She thought, "If only there was a TBR game that was horror themed, everything would be perfect for me." She couldn't find exactly what she wanted, so decided to create what she had envisioned.

She took inspiration from iconic horror films, VHS, and the *Final Girl* solo horror board game created by Van Ryder Games. Most TBR games are based on popular games, so she thought this was the perfect board game to inspire her own TBR game! To avoid any trademark violations, they changed *Girl* to *FMC*, which is a term used in the book world to mean "female main character." And thus, their horror-themed TBR game - *Final FMC* - was born!

Sounds interesting to you? Check out the rulebook in the following pages and download the game for yourself to play, just in time for Spooky Season!

Bow's working on a kickstarter to get the game in actual production, so if you're interested follow her on her socials and let her know!

**YouTube: @BowsBooksYT
Instagram: @BowsBooks**

VHS

HORROR

FINAL ~~SCREE~~ FMC READING CHALLENGE RULEBOOK

a solo tbr game

CREATED BY BOW

OF @BOWSBOOKSYT



COMPONENTS



OBJECTIVE

Play as a Final Girl to choose your TBR for the month. Your TBR is complete when the killer has zero lives... but will you survive?

Play each month and check your stats at the end of the year.

- Which killer had the highest body count?
- How many victims did you save?
- How many Killers did you defeat?
- How many Final Girls are still alive?

I WANT TO PLAY A GAME

SETUP

1. Shuffle each card deck and place them face down near the board (Final Girls, Killers, Locations, Victims, and Weapons).

2. Choose or randomly draw a Final Girl card. This is your final girl for the month and you can use her Perk whenever it applies. Her prompt will be the first book on your TBR. Every Final Girl has 3 lives (except The Good Girl who has 4 due to her Perk).

3. Choose or randomly draw a Killer card. This is your killer for the month. Every killer has 3 lives represented by the 3 prompts on their card. Choose a prompt and add a book to your TBR.

GAMEPLAY

Place your player token on any killer space on the board. Roll a d6 to move around the board clockwise. For every space you land on, choose which action to take.

KILLER SPACE ACTIONS



- **Escape:** Choose one unused Killer prompt to add a book to your TBR and escape the killer's grasp. Killer loses 1 life.
- **Fight:** Use a weapon from your hand to fight back and injure the killer. Killer loses 1-2 lives. (check off 1 killer prompt for free or 2 prompts if you used the killer's matching weapon)

Note: "for free" means you do not have to add a book to your tbr using that prompt



WEAPON SPACE ACTIONS



- **Equip:** Draw a weapon card and add it to your hand. Add a book to your TBR using the prompt. **Note: you can only carry one weapon at a time**
- **Exchange:** If you already have a weapon when landing on a Weapon Space, you can discard your weapon and draw a new one. (take the book chosen with the previous weapon prompt off your TBR and exchange it with a book following the new weapon prompt)
- **Ignore:** Do nothing and roll again.

Note: If you've used your weapon to fight or save a victim, flip the weapon face down to show it's been used. You can NOW carry a new weapon.

VICTIM SPACE ACTIONS



- **Body Count:** Draw a victim card and place the card under the active killer. Add a book to your TBR using the prompt.
- **Saved:** Use a weapon in your hand to save a victim. Add the saved victim to your hand for free. **Note: there is no limit to saved victims in your hand**

LOCATION SPACE ACTIONS



- **Hide:** Draw a location card and add it to your hand. Add a book to your TBR using the prompt. **Note: You can only collect one Location per game (except The Goth who can have 2 Locations by using her Perk)**
- **Exchange:** If you already have a location when landing on a Location Space, you can discard your location and draw a new one. (take the book chosen with the previous location prompt off your TBR and exchange it with a book following the new location prompt)
- **Ignore:** Do nothing and roll again.

PLOT TWIST SPACE ACTIONS



- Use a random generator to add a book to your tbr. This can be a tbr jar, color wheel, 100 random prompts table, randomly generated tbr, etc.

GAME OVER

DEFEATING A KILLER

If the killer drops to zero lives (no more available prompts), the game is over and your TBR for the month is complete.

EPILOGUE

BUT DID YOU DIE?

At the end of each month, complete the Epilogue:

1. Lose 1 life for every book on your tbr that you did not finish.
2. Hide: If you completed a Location prompt, regain 1 lost life. **Note:** if you gained a location for free as The Goth, it counts as a completed location.
3. Sacrifice A Victim To Save Yourself: You can use a saved victim card to regain 1 lost life. However, this will require you to start your next TBR with +1 book using the victim's prompt. **Note:** There's no limit for sacrificing victims
4. If your Final Girl loses all her lives, the Killer is resurrected and you must start the next TBR with +1 book using one of the resurrected Killer's prompts. Shuffle this Killer back into the Killer deck. This Final Girl card is removed from the Final Girls deck unless you roll on the Second Chance Table.
5. If your Final Girl has at least 1 life remaining, you have defeated this Killer! This Killer card is not shuffled back into the Killer deck until you have defeated all other Killers that remain.

SECOND CHANCE TABLE

If you die, roll a d8 to have your Final Girl make a comeback. Start your next TBR with +1 book using the prompt you get:

1. Trapped Between Worlds –Book set in the afterlife or purgatory
2. Back From the Dead –Book about the undead
3. Hell Hath No Fury –Book about feminine rage or revenge
4. Alternate Ending –Book about an alternate history or retelling
5. New Identity –Book about reinvention or being undercover
6. Faustian Bargain –Book that involves a deal with the devil
7. Through the Darkness –Book about mental health or trauma survival
8. You Think You Know, But You Have No Idea -A Memoir

Note: Each Final Girl can only get 1 second chance

This game was inspired by Final Girl, a solo horror board game by Van Ryder Games



a guest interview from
DIANA RODRIGUEZ WALLACH

DIANA RODRIGUEZ WALLACH IS A LOVER OF HAUNTED LOCATIONS, FEMINIST HORROR, AND ALL THINGS SPOOKY. SHE IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF NINE YA NOVELS, INCLUDING SMALL TOWN MONSTERS, HATCHET GIRLS, AND THE SILENCED. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA WITH HER HUSBAND, TWO CHILDREN, AND TWO CATS.

The Silenced, your newest horror novel releasing this month, gives us a look into the “troubled teen industry” as it takes place at “The Farm,” a juvenile detention center for at-risk girls. We’d love to hear more about what you wanted to achieve when writing the novel.

The *Silenced* is inspired by two real reform schools outside of Philadelphia that, for hundreds of years, housed teens who were sent there by the courts. However, as I was writing, I decided to make The Farm operate more like the Troubled Teen Industry (TTI). These facilities are private, often labeled as “therapeutic boarding schools” or “wilderness programs,” and children are sent there by their parents. Abuse is rampant within these institutions, which receive very little government oversight. Recently, survivors (including Paris Hilton) have begun speaking out and lobbying on Capitol Hill for change.

In *The Silenced*, the descriptions of what life is like for teens in these institutions are based on real stories shared by TTI survivors. Additionally, I interviewed Meg Appelgate, a TTI survivor, writer, and CEO of the nonprofit, unsilenced.org, which is dedicated to ending this institutional child abuse. My goal for *The Silenced* is to raise the hairs on the back of your neck while also raising awareness of the injustice teens continue to face in these programs. I hope to break through to parents, teachers, and educators who might not be informed regarding the trauma, and death, caused by “troubled teen” programs.

We’ve heard that “The Farm” is actually based on a hometown haunt of your own! Could you tell us more about the haunting institution that inspired you to write The Silenced?

The school in *The Silenced* is called the Oakwell Farms School for Girls, and while

the story is fictional, I incorporated a lot of the real history of both the Glen Mills School for Boys and the Sleighton Farm School for Girls, both of which opened in the 1800s not far from where I grew up in suburban Philadelphia. In fact, my high school, Ridley High, played Glen Mills in sports. As kids, we were all vaguely aware that boys were “sent there,” but I didn’t truly understand what Glen Mills was until I reached adulthood and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* published an exposé that led to the school’s closure. (Glen Mills has since reopened as a boys’ reform school under the name Clock Tower Schools.)



photo of Sleighton Farm,
the actual reform school *The Silenced*’s setting is based

Unlike Glen Mills, Sleighton Farm was a mystery to me until I began writing *The Silenced*. My neighbor, Andrew Abramson, had briefly worked at Sleighton while a graduate student in social work at the University of Pennsylvania. This is where I began my research for the novel, which ultimately led to the Troubled Teen Industry (TTI).

While I changed the name of the girls’ reform school in *The Silenced*, I describe Sleighton Farm’s 300-plus-acre property in exact detail, making the setting its own

character. Both timelines revolve around this disturbing location—the 1995 girls who are the last crop sent to The Farm, and a present-day teen who explores the now abandoned buildings and comes home haunted.

Your most recent YA novels, Hatchet Girls, Small Town Monsters, and now The Silenced, all feature Latinas as their lead main characters. In adult horror, we're slowly starting to see Latino main characters take the lead in popular books, but it seems that YA is still catching up. We'd love to hear your thoughts on the importance of this representation, especially in a genre like horror.

It's a true cliché that, in horror movies and books, the marginalized character is often killed off early. It's hard to think of many final girls who aren't white. When I decided to write my supernatural horror novels (*The Silenced* will be my third in this genre), I wanted to include my Puerto Rican roots and make my multicultural characters the center of the story. In my books, the Latina isn't the spunky best friend, the spicy love interest, or the strict grandma; she's the main character. She's smart, caring, and solves her own problems.

Additionally, Hazel Perez comes from a Polish and Puerto Rican family, so I incorporate both cultures into the story. I think many teens growing up today are torn between two very different cultures, whether they're Jewish and Thai, Black and Indian, or Puerto Rican and Eastern European. We often grow up feeling we don't "fit" with either group. And I hope kids reading my novels will see themselves on the page.

Was there a specific moment, whether in childhood or adulthood, when you realized horror was your genre?



photo of Diana as she explores the haunting interior of Sleighton Farm, a mysterious hometown reform school

I've loved horror since middle school. I grew up on *Freddy Krueger*. And since becoming a mom, I've been able to share my appreciation for this genre with my teenage daughter.

I think kids today are growing up with a lot of stress and anxiety. They spent their formative developmental years locked down in a pandemic, and horror gives them a sense of control. They can be like, "Look there's someone in this book, or in this movie, who has it worse than me," or "hey, it's okay to be scared," or "wow, I might learn some useful survival tips in the event of a zombie apocalypse or slasher at a summer camp."

Horror also gives writers the opportunity to talk about the world around us without sounding like an afterschool special. Maybe we find the political climate super scary, but instead of writing about these events directly, we write about cults and the lure of following a creepy, charismatic leader, like I did in *Small Town Monsters*. Or maybe we write about the need to speak up and shed light on a corrupt system, like the Troubled Teen Industry,

which I do in *The Silenced*. In horror, these topics are tackled in a way that's entertaining and creepy and unflinching and sometimes even gory, but that's what attracts reluctant readers and what gets kids thinking.

For many millennial horror readers, Goosebumps and Scary Stories to Tell In The Dark were our entryways into the horror genre. What moved you to write for the young adult age group specifically?

I LOVED YA horror and thrillers growing up. But I'm a little bit older than *Goosebumps*. I was a child of the '90s, and I cite Christopher Pike as being my biggest influence. His books, such as *Remember Me*, *Fall Into Darkness*, and *The Midnight Club* (now a Netflix show), made me love reading. So did R.L. Stine's classic *Fear Street* series (also Netflix films). While I've been published since 2008, I feel my recent YA horror novels—*The Silenced*, *Hatchet Girls*, and *Small Town Monsters*—feel like my first attempts to write the type of book I would have read as a teen. For me, YA horror is the reason I became an author,



photo of *The Silenced* as it sits in the wreckage that its plot was inspired by

and I'm so glad the genre is having a moment right now.

If you could sit down with your younger self, what would you say to her about horror, about writing, and about taking up space in the genre?

I got my first literary agent back in 2006, when I was in my mid-20s. So, I've been at this for a long time! I talk very openly about my publishing journey on social media, especially Tiktok, and I often give writing advice. My biggest advice to my former self would be the same that I give to aspiring authors today—don't give up. The difference between a published author and an unpublished one is pure perseverance. There were so many times, when I was drowning in rejection, that I could have called it quits. Most of the authors who debuted with me back in the early 2000s have left publishing. But if you truly believe that THIS is what you are supposed to be doing with your life, don't give up until you make it happen. Love the act of writing so much that you will do it for free, on weekends, in the evenings, or at five in the morning. Because you likely will have to. Do it because you love it; then stick with it. Believe in yourself even if you're the only one who does.

Do elements such as folklore, language, or family storytelling shape your creative process? If so, how do they influence your work?

My dad was born in Utuado, Puerto Rico, and throughout most of my novels, I've tried to delve into my Puerto Rican heritage. I even set one of my books in my father's hometown.

The history of Utuado has deep roots with the Taino tribe. My father's DNA came back about 25% Caribbean Indian, and despite our best efforts, my family has yet to find ancestry evidence that my grandfather's

bloodline leaves the island. This led me to do more research about the Taino people, which ultimately led me to Espiritismo.

For *The Silenced*, I wanted to craft a possession story—a teen girl haunted by a ghost, not a demon—that showcases how a religion other than Catholicism might handle it. Any fan of horror has seen countless films with the old white priest in a collar flinging holy water and shouting, “The power of Christ compels you.” But how would a different religion handle possession?

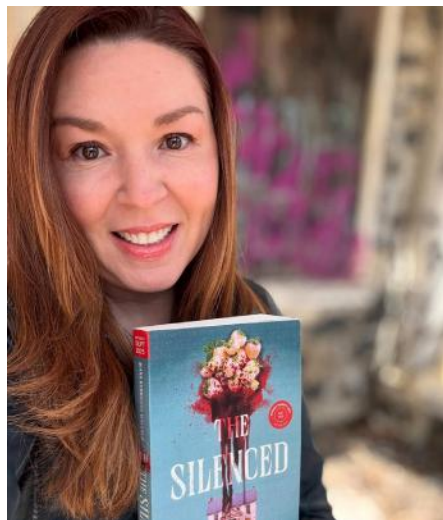
I reached out to a Puerto Rican scholar and expert on Espiritismo, Raquel Romberg, and asked her this exact question. This native Caribbean practice believes both good and bad spirits interact with the human world, and she was able to walk me through what rituals someone might attempt if they believed they were being haunted by a “good” spirit. I then incorporated these traditions into my novels (any mistakes are my own). I even include a section at the end of the novel, called “The Truth,” where I offer facts about Espiritismo.

We'd love to hear about any upcoming projects or stories you're currently working on!

I have another YA horror novel in the works with Delacorte. I’m so lucky to work with the same editor on the last four books. I know that is a rarity in this industry. I’m currently in the drafting stages, so I can’t say too much. But the book is inspired by real American witch trials, beyond Salem, where the scary element comes from the villains holding the noose, not the women being persecuted.

We hope that you enjoyed hearing about Diana's upcoming YA supernatural horror, *The Silenced*, as much as we did!

Make sure to keep a look out as *The Silenced* will be released on September 16, 2025 (this month!). Also stay informed on Diana's upcoming releases on her socials!



Diana and her upcoming novel, *The Silenced*! Releasing September 16th, 2025!

www.dianarodriguezwallach.com

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America's Favorite Frightening Family Is Latino!

An Overview of Gomez Addams' History and Latino Canonization

by Kelsee Thomas, edited by Brittney Norton

"Repelli or Gomez?" This is the question *The Addams Family* creator, Charles Addams, asked John Astin when he was cast to play the role of the overly-devoted father of the spookiest family on the block. The year was 1964, and after almost 30 years of being circulated as a single-panel comic in *The New Yorker*, the Addams Family was finally getting a stand alone series on ABC.

However, Addams had a little problem. None of the family members had names! In preparation for the sitcom premiere, he gathered together Morticia (a play on the word "mortician"), Wednesday (named for the nursery rhyme *Monday's Child* where "Wednesday's child is full of woe"), and Pugsley (who originally was to be named Pubert, but the network felt it was too close to "puberty"). Still, the beloved father of the Addams brood didn't have a name. Knowing that the character was extremely passionate in a way that felt highly debonair, a trait that was at odds with his less-than-suave appearance, Charles Addams took inspiration from the original "Latin Lover," Rudolph Valentino.

Valentino was known throughout the 1920s as a sex symbol in Hollywood and was the genesis of the "Latin lover" trope which was invented for him by Hollywood moguls of the time. Interestingly enough, Valentino wasn't Latin; he was actually Italian! Valentino served as a huge point of inspiration for Addams' character, and when pressed for a name for the head of the Addams household, he couldn't choose between an Italian identity (Repelli) or a Spanish one (Gomez). He placed the choice on the actor portraying him, John Astin. Astin felt that a more Hispanic

background was better suited for the character, and in many episodes of the original sitcom, there are references to the Addams' "ancestral land" of Spain in an episode that aired December 18, 1964. And with that, the "mad Castillian" was born!



from Charles Addams, *The Addams Family* cartoon
printed in *The New Yorker* in 1938

Astin, of course, was clearly not Hispanic, and Gomez was noted as being Spanish, so how did we end up with his eventual canonization as Latino? After the sitcom's airing, which unfortunately only lasted two seasons because of rumors of color programming and competition with *Hogan's Heroes*, *The Addams Family* was left in re-run purgatory. Aside from a short-run, but well-received, 1973 animated series and a widely criticised Halloween special, a live-action version of the family seemed too far-fetched to see again.

That was until 1991 when Barry Sonnenfeld took on directing *The Addams*

Family movie and cast Raul Juliá in the role of Gomez Addams. The Puerto Rican actor insisted that he bring a lot of his culture's background to the role, and it is widely agreed by fans that he was the best iteration of Gomez. It was well known that Juliá loved playing the role and being recognized by children when he was out in public. This same passionate energy was received again from the actor in the second film, *Addams Family Values* (1993), but sadly was amongst one of Juliá's last feature films before his untimely passing in 1994.

With the success of the films, Fox Family decided to remake the sitcom series with Glenn Taranto as Gomez (taking inspiration from John Astin's version of the character), but after two seasons, viewers weren't as interested in the writing and

casting as they were the films. This led to their cancelling the series; however, a third live action film was released in 1998, *Addams Family Reunion*. Although not a proper follow up to *Addams Family Values* (as none of the original cast took part), we saw Gomez in the form of Tim Curry doing his best interpretation of Raul Juliá's version of the beloved character. Nevertheless, this simply wasn't enough to save the film, as it went straight to video and the Addams were sent back to the shelf.

We wouldn't see the Addams hit screens again until 2019 with an animated film and a 2021 sequel—this time with a Latino actor returning to portray Gomez. Oscar Issac, a Guatemalan and Cuban actor, voiced the Addams' head of household for both films, and although they didn't receive huge critical acclaim,



photo still of *The Addams Family* (1991) cast
starring Raul Julia as Gomez Addams

it was clear that Issac felt comfortable in the character's shoes, and the films have garnered a cult following.

This brings us to the latest conjuring of the Addams clan with *Wednesday*. In the Netflix live action series, Gomez is characterized by Puerto Rican actor Luis Guzmán. Guzmán's casting will have made this the third time Gomez is portrayed by a Latino actor in a major production

of *The Addams Family*, a fact that's not gone unnoticed by many. However, the series will be the first time that the franchise has recognized that, if Gomez is Latino (or even Hispanic if we were to stick to the original idea of the character), then this would make his children, Wednesday and Pugsley, offspring of these cultures as well—that the Addams household is Hispanic at the very least. The most recent season of *Wednesday* leans into this point

as the Addams speaking at times in Spanish, refer to Goody Addams as being from Mexico, feature songs such as “Bésame Mucho” by well known Mexican singer Pedro Vargas, and even mention Latino traditions throughout the episodes.

Where does this history put the future legacy of the Addams? Well, it does at least seem to lean towards one thing: Gomez Addams is now canon as having a Hispanic background. And thanks to Raul Julia’s unforgettable charismatic rendition of the character, Hollywood seems to agree that the role should be cast to a Latino actor as that has shown success in the years following his performance. However, I’m not sure Hollywood realized that,

by canonizing the father, this meant canonizing the family as a whole.

This realization has garnered mixed reactions from the public. Some conservative fans are outraged at the idea, calling it another situation of the “woke agenda” to make all television “diverse.” Others have thought that this a great form of representation after decades of having only white or European pop culture “spooky” idols. Then, there are the varied reactions from the Latino/Hispanic community itself. Some are excited by the opportunity to have this frightening family be considered Latino; even the cast of *Wednesday* has discussed the impact during their press run ahead of the season.



photo still of *Wednesday* (2025) cast
starring Luis Guzmán as Gomez Addams

In an interview with IMDb, the cast was asked the following question: Latinos have also always had a strong connection to horror, and knowing that the Addams Family is Latino, how do you feel that cultural lens enhances the show? Jenna Ortega, the actress portraying Wednesday, responded, “I think it helps make it a bit more tangible and real. It’s very easy to make them sort of this mythical, ethereal family, and they lean into that a bit, but it’s nice to be able to make it a bit more personal and a bit more real world.” Or-

tega went on to say in another interview with the Latino news outlet, *mitú*, “Someone like Wednesday was more important [to be Latina] because she is such a well known and well recognized character. I would hope that young Latinas, who maybe are interested in the arts, feel they’re able to watch these projects and things and see themselves and, you know, be encouraged to do the same and pursue their passions.”

This isn’t the first time the young actress has received backlash from the horror/

spooky community though. Ortega, who is Mexican and Puerto Rican, experienced some of the same comments when she first starred in the well known *Scream* franchise, both in *Scream* (2022) and *Scream VI* (2023). Once again, many conservative fans took this casting as a diversity move as other actors of color were also cast in these films as main characters. While the franchise may have had secondary characters of color in the film's history, it never had one play the lead.

Many in the community think the new canon of a Latino Addams Family is great; however, there are others who think that it feels a bit like tokenism. This side argues that the family never intended to have this specific background. Of course, this disregards the stereotypes Addams used to write Gomez's character. It's also important to note that there are just as many who are ambivalent to the family's origin as well. Some state that, by Gomez's name alone, they always assumed he was Hispanic, and others state that, by the surname Addams, they never gave the family a second thought as being anything other than white.

While it may not be clear on the true background of the Addams Family based on such a shifting history, their fluctuating identities have been based on what each era's audience needed.

Charles Addams created *The Addams Family* to be subversive to the "traditional" American family view of the time, a beacon for those outcasts who do not fit the norm but were somehow still relatable with all of their weirdness. They aren't evil but are welcoming—a family that supported one another through all of their endeavors, a close-knit family that just happens to prefer a graveyard in their backyard instead of a pool. This is the heart of the Addams.

For all of us weirdos out here, *The Addams Family* represents something we can

all agree is needed: understanding and being seen in all of our weird interests and forms, even if that form takes the shape of a disembodied hand with a charismatic attitude.

LUMINOUS AND SMOKEY.

*PORTALS IS A NEWSLETTER BY STEPHANIE VALENTE
CHRONICLING EXPLORATIONS AND MUSINGS ON THE POETIC,
ESOTERIC, MYSTERIOUS, AND BEAUTIFUL, PRECIOUS THINGS.*

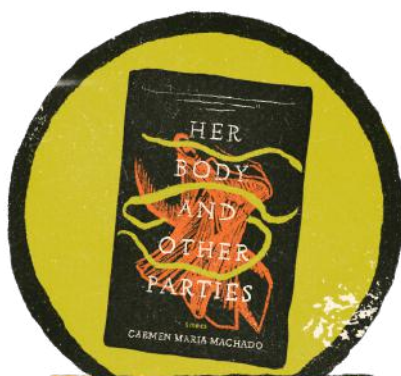
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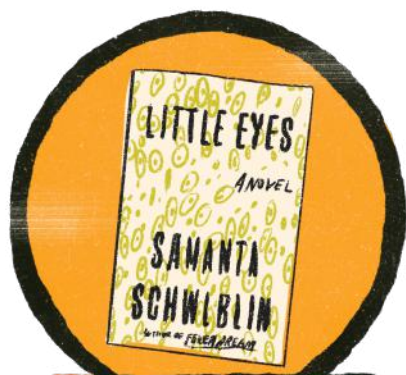
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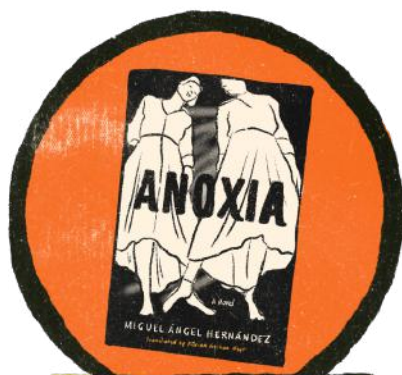
Annie's Laughing Place



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HER BODY AND OTHER PARTIES BY
CARMEN MARIA MACHADO



KELSEE'S CHOICE
LITTLE EYES BY SAMANTA SCHWEBBLIN



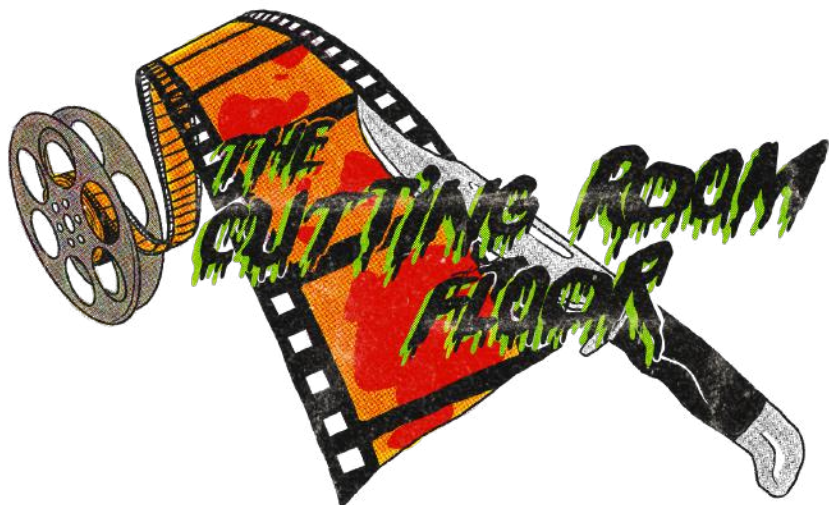
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A Thank You From Editor-In-Chief, Elli Wade

Ah, yes. Another month, another thank you note. Thank you yet again, dear readers. We are genuinely honored to have so many recurring readers each month. Night Terror is our whole heart—writing for this publication each month, being challenged to think more deeply, researching intentionally, and connecting with so many interesting and dynamic creators. I'm humbled always by the talent within these pages and the community engagement every month. Thank you a million times over.

Thank you to A.P. Thayer for his truly moving article this month. When I read it, I blew out an audible, "Wow." Your writing is engaging and immersive.

Thank you for sharing a little bit of yourself with us and our readers in this month's issue. Your series, *Building a Latine Community in Speculative Fiction*, for Frivolous Comma opened my eyes and influenced the care I put into this month's issue. Thank you again!

Big thanks to Diana who agreed, after a week of being terribly sick, to still participate in our publication! It's truly an honor to have you be a part of our September issue, and I can't help but feel like a proud mom that interviewed the author that Kelsee did a book cover for! Sending you the best of wishes and a successful pub day! Thank you again for your vulnerability during your interview. We can't wait to see what you do next!

Um, hello!? Bow! Your TBR game is genuinely incredible. I am in awe of your creativity and drive to put something together that is so unique and intentional—let alone something we just have not seen in the horror realm. Thank you so very much for sharing that with our team and our readers! We're so excited to watch this project grow and look forward to the future of *Final FMC*.

To Brit and Kelsee, thank you always for your unwavering support. Thank you for talking me down after absolutely hating my first article (yes, I wrote two last month). Brit, thank you for instilling a confidence within me when I struggled to instill it within myself. I appreciate your guidance always. Kelsee, thank you for always being a guiding light when we navigate the dark and murky waters of our current political climate. I love that we can work together to find joy within that, and I'm always so impressed with your thoughtful issue covers. Love you both tremendously!

As ALWAYS, a tremendous thank you to our wonderful patrons: A.P., Adam, Alexsandr a, Altay, Annelise, Ashley, Brian, Caleb, Candice, Carrie, Dani, Elisabeth, Emily, Eric, Gavin, Justin (aka JGTESD), Katie, Missy Creep, Sadie (aka Mother Horror), Torrie, and Tyler!



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