

School of the Americas

Rebecca Black

Sergio has ink-pot eyes, girlish wrists.
He draws superheroes extremely well—
Avengers, Wolfman, El Toro Rojo,

any one wearing a mask. Monday nights
we drive to the art club meeting
in the cream-colored Sunbird

I bought with babysitting money.
I don't know how he ended up with his mom
in the South, just the two of them, but

I spend 9th grade sitting next to him,
translating a Georgia O'Keeffe painting
into pastel chalk: a lily dusted with pollen.

One day during class, Sergio tells me he saw
his grandparents shot *before his eyes*
back in Colombia. The phrase sticks out

in his heavy accent, like a child repeating
something just overheard. After a few minutes,
we go back to our drawings.

In the evenings that year I sign my name
to stock letters sent by Amnesty International
and mail them to the faraway dictators

of the 1990s: Mubarak, Mobutu, Marcos.
All the while a quarter of a tank away,
at the School of the Americas (now the

*Western Hemispheres Institute for Security
Cooperation*) hundreds of Colombian
soldiers train in truth extraction,

how to intimidate, the best ways
to torture. In our yearbook,
I list my hobbies: poetry

and human rights. I have yet
to draw a picture of anything
from life—the art teacher seems

disappointed that Sergio and I
are mere copyists. After graduation,

Sergio finished a year of art school
in Chicago, got cancer and died.
I guess I had a crush on him

when we were fourteen,
and I sat next to him,
copying those sexual flowers.

One has to start somewhere.
Just start: before my eyes could see,
I drew things like that lily.

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