

Cowboy Park

Eduardo Martínez-Leyva

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For queer Latinx Eduardo Martínez-Leyva, raised in El Paso by Mexican immigrants, piecing together a suitable cloak of masculinity is as much about survival as it is identity. His brother's detainment and deportation serves as a uniquely cruel facet of the Mexican American experience, one Eduardo internalizes at great peril to his mental health. *Cowboy Park* is his debut collection. He lives and teaches in New York City after earning his MFA from Columbia University.

I NEVER WANTED TO SPEAK

(first published in Nepantla: An Anthology Dedicated to Queer Poets of Color)

*of the house facing Cowboy Park
where my childhood pets are buried.*

*Eight small skulls scattered, each
a burned-out bulb keeping the fig tree*

*company, guarding the needles
I'd eventually unearth. My neighbor,*

*the infected queen, taught me
how to shoot down pigeons.*

*Think of them as compliments, he'd say.
By the time I was old enough to know*

*what he meant, it was too late
for him. Still, he slept inside me*

*for many seasons, cocking
his shotgun at a flinching sky.*

*Disguised in pill and sneer,
he waited for warmth to enter the body.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (November / December 2024)

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