

MUNDO MUERTE

by Misti Rainwater-Lites

The world ends tomorrow. Ready set GO. Smoke fills every room.
The fire is sponsored by PRADA.

"None of this is real," says Madonna. She's on her farm with a new face, a tighter vagina and a much younger Italian Gemini boyfriend named Vito. Madonna knows what is UP.

Meagan rides the subway with perfect lips and deep thoughts, looking moody out the smudged window like an actress in a Sofia Coppola film. A Wall of Sound song is playing because Phil Spector ("Guilt is a fetish. Eat your lettuce."), Capricorn, is widely regarded as one of the most influential producers in American Bandstand history. His conviction was second-degree murder with a .38 caliber Colt Cobra but we love our gangstas in America and anyway, Phil was only playing his role to the hilt, unstuck as he was in time like our boy Billy Pilgrim.

Was it only yesterday, yes probably, that Meagan sat across from Elliott in Bagel Nest. They were drinking the best coffee available in Brooklyn. The sex in Elliott's loft the night previous had been decent, as always, but Meagan was restless and mentally manic. She was hungry for something she could not pronounce.

"I don't get Taylor Swift. Her songs don't meet the minimal requirements," Meagan said.

"That is not the consensus," Elliott said.

"You're supposed to say that. Who sent you here? MK Ultra?"

"You're treading dangerous water, babe. Let's discuss the brilliant cerulean and orange art that hangs on every beige wall. Really livens the joint up. Relevance marries gravitas with much whimsy and elan. This is the place to be. We're young. We're rich. We're hip. We're in New York, for fuck's sake. No flaw to this formula."

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Of course Elliott had a tortie cat named Holden. Of course he had a mother named Parsley and a dad named Skip. His parents met at a poetry reading at Sarah Lawrence. Yoko Ono sang at their wedding. The first book Elliott read on his own of his own volition was *The Great Gatsby*. Not in junior high but in kindergarten. Teachers praised his excellent manners and grasp of the English language. The kid could really string a sentence together. He never picked his nose, never invaded anyone's sacred space. His top five favorite albums? Easy. He could rattle the list off at any art gallery opening. "Pet Sounds." "Rubber Soul." "Highway 61 Revisited." "Rumours." "Daydream Nation." Yes, Elliott adhered to a gluten free diet and only drank craft beer and hard seltzer in moderation.

"When did you first know you were alive?" Meagan's first boyfriend, Blevins, asked her after they had sex the first time. First time for both of them. Fifteen. Rooftop. So many stars. Sharing SUMO gummies. The flavor was BLUEMATIC RAZZ. Obnoxious blue raspberry. But served its purpose. Some kind of big deal chardonnay, buttery but not at all flabby. Bottle stolen from the wine refrigerator that belonged to Vanessa, wife number three. Husband was Finch, father of Blevins and five or six others.

"Um. Now. I know I'm alive now," Meagan said with a shiver and a sigh.

"Other than now. You were alive up until this point. Something somewhere along the line turned you on, made you realize you were very much on the map."

"Oh. Yeah. I was five. I was at the zoo. I saw my first lion. He yawned, showing all those lion teeth. I was so scared I pissed myself. My nanny berated me. She shamed me. She verbally abused me. I knew then that I was definitely defiantly alive."

All of this is ending and none of this matters. It's 1995 and Meagan hasn't even been conceived yet. She's someone else but she's still a

girl. She's a dispossessed native Texan on a road march at dawn or right before dawn, actually, beneath South Carolina stars. The dog tags jingle jangle. O positive. Baptist. The M16 is locked and loaded. The MOS is 77 Foxtrot. Her name is Angie. Private First Class Ruvalcaba. Private First Class Ruvalcaba is looking forward to black coffee and a Tootsie Roll from the MRE.

And then it's 2026 and Angie is ancient by American standards, sitting with her grey hair and fucked up knees on a pink sofa in a brick house built in 2013. As she sews the irregular pieces of fabric (old socks and silk bonnets, mostly) to the wire mesh she mutters, "Fuck you all, you fucking fucks." Talking to assorted ghosts. Old memories. The usual demons.

Meagan sits in a bathroom stall in Whole Foods. A song that she first heard in utero is playing. "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart." Rhetorical question. Bee Gees, not Al Green. There's a quote scrawled in black Sharpie on the door.

i found god in myself
& i loved her
i loved her fiercely

TUPAC SHAKUR

Meagan laughs and then she sobs because she knows the truth and it matters, matters so much that she walks seven blocks to the nearest tattoo shop and pays \$375 for two tattoos, the Ntozake Shange quote on her left wrist and an actual Tupac Shakur quote on her right.

Westside when we ride
come equipped with game

"But babe. You're white," Elliott says as he surveys the fresh ink.
"Not much gets past you," Meagan says.

Amber Rose is trending at Twitter X and so is the Department of Education.

