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A Final Cry for Johnny

By Robert A. Gomez II

He stepped over branch after branch on his way down the road, wincing at the light that stung his eyes. This light was from the sun, but it was the small metal bridge that made its beams true. Hallowed by the sky, a white path through and through.

He felt the heat of the clear day, but the heat at his back was of a different kind. As the one in the bridge's direction was warm and soft, the one behind him was a fire.

He didn't dare turn his head for fear of the unbearable heat. Instead he looked down to not be blinded by the bridge's unbearable luminescence.

Bright, bright was all he could think as he stepped and stepped down the path. Each foot moved in exaggerated motions over the branches that had long since fallen from now barren trees. Trees that towered as monuments to their submissive nature. For no matter how far he traveled, the land he wouldn't dare take from the same sun as the bridge at the end of the road.

He wasn't blind. The red earth was every inch a mile. His path, every foot a face that looked like the one before it. Their teeth blackened by dirt, and their eyes wide with large damaged pupils. The land disappeared behind him a single thought at a time.

Every bit of time was an elusive blot. He chose not to mind time, moving with exaggerated motions as the heat pushed on his back. He was

only steps from the bridge. What lay before him was what little time remained, but he wouldn't stop his stride.

He wasn't deaf. Every snap was far behind him. All that mattered was the bridge at the end of the road. Forever blinding, as it watched his show.

Jagged, jagged clouds were awkwardly pulled with his every step. Before unnoticeable, they were now furiously tugged under the sun like cans on a newlywed's car. Men screamed as buglers blew away the present as crimson slashes faded from their view. Cool pushed from their lungs as the sweat that was never there cooled so fast he shivered as his heavy foot slammed onto the grey bridge. The bridge was only of cement and cheap metal, but the only path that was clearly marked was given through the egotistical gazes of embellished light and unhallowed sun.

Red rushed through his body as a thick venom dissolved in his chest. A hundred tiny hands climbed his arms, to his fingers, to his legs, to his neck, and then to his very tired gaze as they kept them staring into the grey beneath.

The heat was now hotter than the sky while they faced sweet cold. The tug he always ignored yanked again with an indomitable conviction. He turned, squinting feebly to halt the heat from burning his boiling skin.

There stood an image of himself. Thin and covered in leathery skin reaching out with bones protruding from fat and oily palms. A single braided branch lay crisp there, as everything behind it had been crushed under its youthful naked feet. The heat engulfed them as it bared its large teeth in utter innocence. He gripped the branch, then its hand, feeling a tinge of guilt as the many tiny hands tightened their insignificant grip. They walked

across the bridge sharing his tears and its memories. He felt the hands grow in weight; his skin crumbling at the center of the bridge. Again, he felt the tug at his back and he readily turned having prepared a façade as indomitable as its regret. But it gently took the branch from him and tossed it over the bridge.

It opened its eyes to the echo of the last snap it had always heard, as disorienting and final as the day was short and space boundless. Slowly it got to its feet with a confused expression, shivering in the shadows of the monuments to the land that has no bridge at the end of the road.