

Forces

Volume 2015

Article 3

5-1-2015

Bench on Bishop

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Recommended Citation

Reyes, Hector (2015) "Bench on Bishop," *Forces*: Vol. 2015 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2015/iss1/3>

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BENCH ON BISHOP Hector Reyes



I became a living skeleton, drenched
 in feverish sweat and hellfire. No point
 in making friends with the other bodies;
 they came and went quicker than there were beds.
 We were all just coughing, sneezing bed numbers.

I was 25 when I drowned in my own lungs,
 disappearing into the night like the sun. My
 husband had stopped writing years before;
 it was no surprise that he didn't claim me like
 he once did. They tossed me in the ground
 behind the asylum like a sack of moldy grain, with
 nothing to show that I had ever haunted those halls.
 Many other "numbers" from the Mississippi State
 Lunatic Asylum joined my plot of earth. Our only
 acknowledgement came from the wildflowers
 Mother Nature brought us each year, the worms
 holding feasts of celebration over our convenient demises.

I was 138 when I saw light again; it wasn't
 at the end of the tunnel. They took
 me to another hospital, the stench
 of my rotten body clashing with the sharp
 smells of sterility and alcohol.

Instead of finding my family, they found
 out how much it would cost to rebury me.

Instead of learning my name, they learned
 I was one out of two thousand.

I am still a number, another body, simply
 one more corpse in an unmarked grave.