

The Kiss

When Miguel was just thirteen he realized that loneliness could make him do almost anything. A girl a year older than him named Gabriela with chocolate brown eyes and ringlets down to her shoulders told him if he took off his shirt and climbed the tree at the edge of the playground she would give him a kiss when he came down. He climbed slowly to the very top to show her he was truly worthy of her lips then yelled:

“Look Gabriela, look!”

Even from this distance he heard her laughter, watched as she gave him the finger then screamed:

“You idiot!”

She threw his shirt in some thorny bushes; Miguel gripped the branch he was holding so hard his knuckles turned white. He'd climbed so high he wasn't sure how to get down so he leaned back against the trunk of the tree and thought how surely real men were beyond loneliness, and how he would have to become one of those men if he ever wanted to get anywhere.