

RONCESVALLES

“I was this close,” he had his thumb and forefinger nearly pressed together. “Twice,” he explained, scissoring the air.

“La Señora knows,” I said. “She sees you suffering.” I swatted at the flies buzzing around the greasy red table.

“Suffering? I’m talking about what I did and almost did.”

I don’t know why I didn’t, but I was going to tell him to find a Romanesque church. He needed to pray in a heavy, squat, masoned church, not one with all that colonial-gold Baroque frontage.

Instead, I threw a chunk of bread and hit him on the forehead. It fell onto his plate of gamey goose leg in gravy. He mopped up gravy and ate the bread, smacking his lips and smiling.

I was pretty drunk, embarrassed by how many of my friends were further along the road than I was, so I took my leave. He waved me off with a splash of wine.

I wandered down the road until I found a grove of trees. I took off my clothes and nestled in the arms of a beechwood until my mind emptied out into nothing.