

**Marcelo knew the** Truth. At the end of the day, the military didn't give two shits where any of them landed. In the words of one Joe: You can go to Mars for all we care. You just need to get up out of here.

Marcelo had spent the past year in a cramped motel room with his **new** crew, Lionel and Puño. Moss View—at least according to the state's playbook—was the East Haven Climate Refugee Center. **That is, until everybody received a five day eviction notice. Marcelo balled it up and tossed it at Joe's chest.** ~~They had five days to get up and move to Mars. ¡Lo cabrónes!~~

Insurance companies had been jerking Marcelo around for months, refusing to pay for the needed repairs to their home after El Niño. **It was all so confusing to him.** Home value is factored into rebuilding grants, they said. We can't cover wind damage, they said. Marcelo had been holed up in Room 12 all morning talking to his **dead** wife Palacio about next steps. It was after 2 by the time Marcelo found his way outside. His crew was sitting at one of the twelve-foot tables set up in the parking lot **and**

waved him over. They were shoveling mouthfuls of peas and rice in their face. Brown fists curled round white plastic forks. He put his tray down and settled in beside them. By next week, I won't have to see none of your ugly mugs again, Marcelo said.

Lionel laughed and spit peas. My wrinkled behind either, Hulk.

So when's D Day? Marcelo asked for the 20th time in so many weeks.

Puño picked something stuck between his teeth. Thursday they saying.

**Aqui me quedo.** I'm not leaving my Palacio.

Lionel and Puño exchanged a look. There was a time when they used to gently remind him that his wife was gone. But not today. Okay, Hulk. We hear you. They said nothing more.

Marcelo earned the nickname within weeks of arriving at the motel with the other so-called climate refugees. He had flipped over the dessert tray one of the attendants had been holding for the entire table. Started yelling at the staff, tossing small frozen cups of lemon-flavored ice to the ground and stomping them. As security dragged him away from the

makeshift dining area, he pleaded with them to help him find Palacio and his old piragua cart near the beach so he could show them all. If not for Puño stepping in, the guards would have brought him to the isolation area instead of the infirmary. Two weeks later, the diagnosis of dementia had shaken him. The Hulk nickname stuck, but Marcelo, already in his mid-seventies, had started to shrink to nothing overnight.

Run north if you want, Marcelo said. Follow Musk to Mars. I'm going home. **Marcelo and Palacio got their home in '95 after living in a cramped one bedroom apartment on Saltonstall Avenue for two years. It was a fixer upper. The last house on a dead-end street next to Lighthouse Beach. Palacio had wanted to be near the shore because it reminded her of her childhood in Punta Santiago. They were the only Puerto Rican family on Caya Drive. Outsiders in the community with neither chick nor child.**