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ESCONDIDO

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Escondido

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The following piece, “Escondido”, came as a reflection after partaking in the 2022 Lavender Languages Institute after reading the article titled The Complexity of the “x” in Latinx: How Latinx/a/o Students Relate to, Identify with, and Understand the Term *Latinx* (Salinas, 2020). I self-identify as Latinx and throughout the week at the 2022 Lavender Languages Institute, I reflected on what Latinx meant to me. My initial understanding of Latinx was that the term would allow me to express my non-binary gender identity and be more inclusive of gender divergence. I also learned about Latin* and how it unsettled superficial understanding of Latinx, and I realized the X meant more than showcasing gender inclusivity. To me, the X meant embracing my hometown situated in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Escondido translates to “hidden” in Spanish and my hometown is often called the Hidden Valley. The X meant embracing the hidden quality of my home and the borderlands community as well as empowering me to no longer hide.

Lost in the center, lost at the edge.
How can someone find a home in nowhere?
Somehow, I can.
I can find a home in this space that pulls me in different directions,
towards two ends of a rope that I do not want to meet.
Towards two different countries,
two different cultures that ask you to belong to them –
but somehow you are never enough to be fully part of either one.

Towards a space on the map that doesn't seem to exist past the mark of an “X.”
And yet, even from within this X, nobody seems to notice.

We all notice but we don't say anything because even if we do,
what good would it do?
There's nothing to discuss;
after all, this is the reality we live,
so why fight it?
With this X you learn to hide,
to not look for answers elsewhere.

After all, the answers seem to be hidden within this contradictory space.
My home is in a shallow valley hidden behind rocky hills.

All the signs and people proudly call us the Hidden Valley,
but sometimes we take being hidden too seriously.
We are proud to be nothing more than an X,
a space on the map that most people don't look twice upon.

No one wants to stay here for long,
even though it is the perfect destination.

Forty minutes away from everything:
the beach, the actual city, the border, the mountains.
Forty minutes away from escape,
from existence anywhere but here.

People say a space like this is a wound.
But to many of us, it's a home,
a space where we can hide –
because no one wants to look at this X for too long.

When you successfully hide in the X,
you realize you can't leave.
Somehow, we fall into the trance of believing that this place holds all the answers.
Everyone always asks why leave?
But why stay in a space that everyone wants to leave?
Maybe it's about feeling bad for the valley,
for letting it be alone,
or maybe it's because we too want to hide from everyone else.



Reference

Salinas, C. (2020). The complexity of the “x” in the Latinx: How Latinx/a/o students related to, identify with, and understand the term Latinx. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 19(2), 149-168. doi:[10.1177/1538192719900382](https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192719900382)