**Melanie Flores**

Nightmare

Under an eggplant sky

a shard of moonlight

ricochets off an ancient chest.

My hand hesitates on the lid -

every muscle tenses.

The hoot of an owl

pierces the lethargy of the night.

*What treasure lies within?*

*Precious jewels and gold?*

*A bounty of wishes?*

*Ancient scrolls scribed with the secrets of life?*

I tug at the weathered carapace -

the chest cracks open.

A waft of vinegar escapes

unleashing the horrors of the world.

Cancer, mass shootings,

ignorance, racism,

pandemics and loneliness.

I drop the lid

and scream myself awake.

I realize that my nightmare

is real.

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