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Bench on Bishop

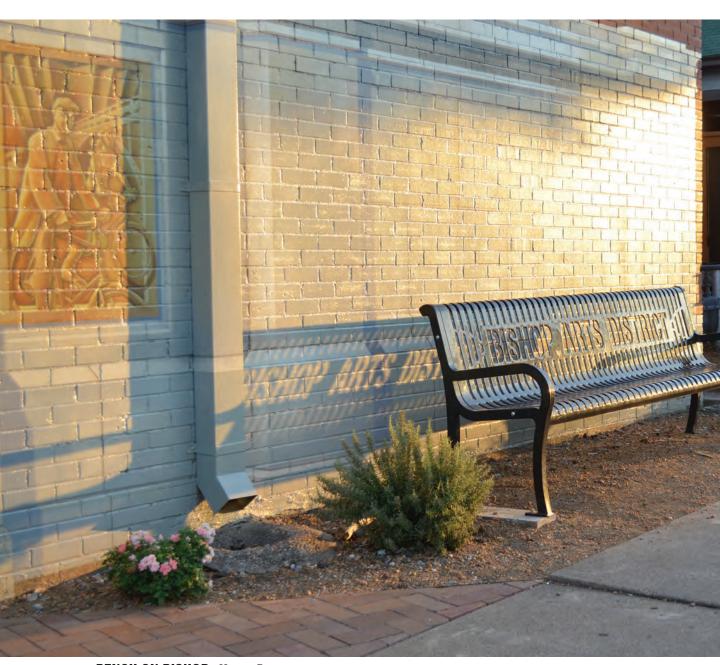
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BENCH ON BISHOP Hector Reyes



I became a living skeleton, drenched in feverish sweat and hellfire. No point in making friends with the other bodies; they came and went quicker than there were beds. We were all just coughing, sneezing bed numbers.

I was 25 when I drowned in my own lungs, disappearing into the night like the sun. My husband had stopped writing years before; it was no surprise that he didn't claim me like he once did. They tossed me in the ground behind the asylum like a sack of moldy grain, with nothing to show that I had ever haunted those halls. Many other "numbers" from the Mississippi State Lunatic Asylum joined my plot of earth. Our only acknowledgement came from the wildflowers Mother Nature brought us each year, the worms holding feasts of celebration over our convenient demises.

I was 138 when I saw light again; it wasn't at the end of the tunnel. They took me to another hospital, the stench of my rotten body clashing with the sharp smells of sterility and alcohol.

Instead of finding my family, they found out how much it would cost to rebury me.

Instead of learning my name, they learned I was one out of two thousand.

I am still a number, another body, simply one more corpse in an unmarked grave.