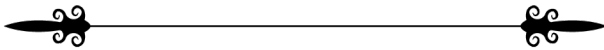


Southern Cross





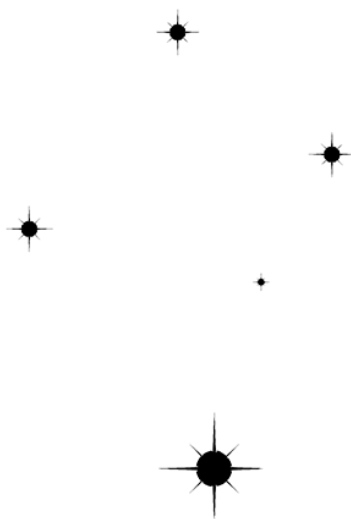
Southern Cross



Mike Sims



Southern Cross



Acknowledgements

To my family and friends that believed in me and my writing.

Also to all the readers of my work for which I am deeply
thankful.

For Alfredo

Southern Cross

Copyright © 2018 by Mike Sims. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any way by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author except as provided by USA copyright law.

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, descriptions, entities, and incidents included in the story are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, events, and entities is entirely coincidental. The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of Mazzaroth.

Published by Mazzaroth
www.Mazzaroth.net

Fiction / Adventure

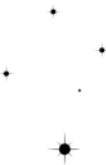


Contents

Miguel	1
The Typical Day	9
The Rival.....	17
Hector's Day.....	21
Zora's Day.....	25
Sarah's Day.....	29
Zane's Day	31
Laura's Day.....	33
Raul's Day.....	37
The Man From The City.....	41
Say Uncle.....	51
Carlos Apart.....	61
It Takes a Village To Make an Idiot	67
The Dark Before the Dawn.....	79
A New Dawn and a New Day	89
Behind the Curtain	97
Back There.....	103
Stars don't Lie	125
Children Should be Seen Not Heard	131
Exposed	153
A New Day Arises	167
The News.....	173

The Journey Home	179
Time to Pay the Price of their Folly.....	185
Home Again.....	195
Diplomatic.....	203
The Hammer Falls	207
Destination D.C.	209
Emancipation Vacation	219
It Is Good To Be Back	225
The Bells Ring the Valley	237
Equinox.....	243
Epilogue.....	247





Miguel



Miguel

The distant stars seem so constant to us as we plan and scheme below them. After the sun has dominated the day, the heavens are our reassurance that despite our attempt to manage the affairs on the Earth, they are the same. They comfort us in the pitch of a black sky. While our sun gives life to all things on our planet the distant suns play their part in our lives and in nature as rhythm and signs. It is in that night air that a twelve-year-old boy name Miguel Ortiz sits on the rocks and stares at the stars as he ponders.

“The stars are near and far yet they seem to make shapes. If constellations are real then it must mean God is here with us making them so we can all see them that way,” he mutters to himself.

A distant voice of his dad Manuel cries out, “Miguel! Come home!”

“Coming!” Miguel yells back as he continues to look up at the night sky. I wonder what else is up there? he thinks.

Miguel runs back home which is a small village on a plateau backdropped by distant mountains. They live in the state of Michoacán, Mexico and their little village named Las Oilas almost



a primitive community of thirty-four residents. They live a simple life with no modern appliances, no cell phones, no TV – nothing to connect them to the world as you and I know it in the 1990s. They have been there for seven generations living in an arid, desert area with no real discernable form or landmark to speak of. Even the mountains in the distant seem non-descriptive. They perform their daily tasks of growing vegetables and tending to chickens, cows, and sheep for their livelihood and food stores. One well in the center of town provides all the life-giving fluid they need. It is simple but in certain ways paradise, as no one bothers them from the outside.

Their life may be simple but they are by no means a simple-minded people. They choose a life that is debt free and unrestrained by the modernness of the world. They know that living the convenience of that life comes with a price, a price that they'd rather not have to pay, but they enjoy the true freedom of lifeless tied down. The stresses of the daily chores of their lives also acts as a stress relief as they make them strong and healthy, not weakened by a life of comfort. They do not need supplements for their food as it has all the nutrients they need. All in their lives

Miguel



has a balance. Most people in the modern world strive for that balance or at least wish for it, but time is their enemy and excuse their way. Not for the villagers. Their way is to handle the task at hand and enjoy the time to do things that most modern people wait for two weeks out of the year to do. It is a sermon lived by few and known by many. Yet for the villagers it is hard but rewarding. The rhythm of a good life plays music that grows the soul in ways not understood. Only those that are lucky enough to afford such a life can reap the benefits of the quiet song. A song that sings out enough that everyone knows it is there. This is their life and their story.

Most villagers are illiterate yet traveling teachers come to teach their young sometimes. However, some have left to find a different life in the cities. One that did is Carlos, Miguel's uncle. He went to college and work as a geologist for a local oil and gas company. He visits his old home village sometimes and brings Miguel things to entice his nephew to seek a life elsewhere. Miguel's dad is not convinced as he feels the village life is all that they need. His philosophy is embraced by those living there and look to him for leadership and steadfastness.

As Miguel arrives home, he sees his father working on a wooden contraption.



“Late again, son,” his father observes.

“Sorry, Dad. The stars make me think a lot and I lose track of time.”

“Nothing wrong with thinking but you need your sleep. You have chores during the day, you know.”

“Yes, sir.” Miguel watches his dad and asks, “What is that?”

“It is a slapper.”

Miguel laughs. “A slapper?”

Manuel joins in his laughter. “Yes, son, a slapper. You see, the goats eat everything including the food meant for the chickens. So, we put the chicken food in the basket as normal but the slapper sits above it. The chickens can eat no problem but the larger goat has to move it out of the way which makes this thing spin and hit the goat which startles them. Hopefully, it will keep them out.”

“We keep them separate though.”

“Not always, son.”

“Okay, Dad.” Miguel climbs his ladder to the shelf that acts as his bedroom while Manuel packs his project away.

“Time for me to sleep as well,” Manuel says as they both make their way to bed.

“Dad.”

Miguel



“Yes, son.”

“Do you think I will be an astronomer someday?”

“I think anything is possible, but you are old enough to understand that your life is here and you will most likely be living as a farmer like me.”

“Uncle made it out of here.”

“This is not a jail, son. I just don’t want you to be disappointed. It takes a lot of learning to be an astronomer.”

“I learned how to read.”

“So did I, son, but I am quite content being here.”

“I *will* be an astronomer someday, Dad.”

“I admire your ambition. We will see how you think in a few years’ time. Now get some sleep.”

Miguel rolls over and stares at the ceiling of their homemade of trees and sod. He feels overwhelmed by the prospect of being an astronomer but ever hopeful. However, he can’t repress the dreadful feeling that his dad might be right. He closes his eyes to sleep feeling sad when a piece of dirt from the ceiling falls from between the wood and hits him on the head. He opens his eyes and a small hole has appeared with a star shining through to him. He smiles and stares at it until he drifts asleep.



The next morning Miguel is awakened by his dad standing on his room ladder.

“Wake up, son.” Manuel sees the sun peering in through the ceiling hole. “I have some food on the table. After you eat, fix that hole above your bed. Must be a board loose on the roof.” His dad climbs down the short ladder and goes to the table.

Miguel looks at the hole. “My window to the universe,” he says to himself as he joins his father at the breakfast table where a corn-like concoction awaits him. Miguel chews on his dad’s culinary creation and asks, “Dad, you think of mom very often?”

“Almost every day, son.”

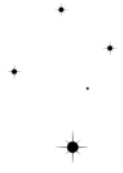
“Do you think she would have wanted me to be a farmer or an astronomer?”

Manuel slowly stirs his food in the bowl. “Eat your food,” he says without answering the question.

“Yes, sir. I just wonder what she would think of me if she was still alive.”

“She would be proud of you and even your star watching stuff. But I think she would tell you to be a farmer like me. You know she did not marry an astronomer but a farmer. She was pretty enough to marry anyone she wanted.”

Miguel



Miguel continues to eat his food wondering about his mother. She was taken by an illness when he was four years old. He has faint memories of her holding him and singing to him. He cannot remember the words but the tune carries in his heart like a drum that beats with every moment.





The Typical Day



The Typical Day

Miguel and his dad start the day feeding the goats, sheep, cows, and chickens. Miguel draws water from the well and pours the good bucket into the two he carries on a stick side by side using his shoulders.

“Here we go,” Manuel says, grabbing a bucket. He pours the drinking trough for the animals as they come running for their nourishment. “Nothing more rewarding than taking care of animals that take care of you,” he tells Miguel.

“Yes, sir.”

“Come on, then. Let’s move the dairy cows to the barn so the ladies can milk them.”

As they finish in the barn Miguel looks over as Sarah Martinez and her daughter Laura pass them to milk the cows. Laura smiles at Miguel but, as he smiles back, she quickly sticks her tongue out at him. Miguel looks puzzled as she laughs.

“Laura, stop that,” her mother says.

Miguel stares as they enter the barn and Laura stops and looks over her shoulder at Miguel.

“Laura!” her mom yells, drawing Laura into the barn.



Manuel looks at Miguel with a sense of relief that his son may be a farmer yet. “Son.” Manuel starts back to their house.

“Yes, sir,” Miguel replies, catching up with his dad.

“Laura is quite the cutie isn’t she?” Manuel says later, as he washes his hands at the sink.

“She is alright,” Miguel says noncommittally.

“If I were you, I would be chasing after that one.”

“Dad! She is eleven.”

“Oh, big age difference, son.”

“We are good friends, Dad. I can’t see her the other way.”

“Hmm. Okay.”

Manuel pulls out some bread and beans mashed up and puts them on the table. “Here you go, son.”

“Dad, do you think we can go hiking?” Miguel asks while chewing his food.

“In this heat?”

“At night and look at the stars.”

“Son, there is nothing to see.”

“I was thinking if we went to the mountains we could see the stars better.”

The Typical Day



“Do you know how far away those mountains are, son? They are just bumps in the distance which means they are way too far for us to get to.”

“You think Uncle Carlos can take me the next time he visits?”

“No, it is too dangerous. There are lots of bad people out there.”

Miguel looks disappointed as keeps eating. “Dad?”

Manuel drops his head. “Yes, son.”

“Can we just at least hike down to the old dried river? We went there once before.”

“Will it shut you up for a while?”

“Yes, sir.”

Manuel looks at his son as Miguel stares back in anticipation. “Sure,” he says eventually after we fix the sheep fence we will make our way out.”

“Yea!”

Miguel eats his food in record time and waits for his dad to be done so they can finish the chores. It seems ages before Manuel finally finishes eating and starts to the sheep fence. There are twenty or so sheep the villagers collectively keep there. But constant moving around by the sheep and being startled by anything around them has broken part of the fence. Manuel and Miguel take branches from old oak trees and some from junipers



found in the less arid regions a little further away and cut the straightest branches to fix the fence. Miguel anxiously helps to complete the task.

“Well, son, if you only worked like that all the time, this village would have no problems,” his dad observes.

“Can we go now, Dad?”

“Yes. Let’s grab the water bottles.”

They grab old plastic water bottles from supplies Manuel’s brother left with other visiting relatives who try to bring some of the modern world to Las Oilas. Miguel is excited and runs into the house to grab the bottles and, by the time his dad has brought the tools back home, Miguel is ready.

“Okay, son, let’s go.” They head west toward an old dry river bed cut off after a dam was placed in a larger town for commercial farmers. The villagers had to move to tap the aquifers with a well to keep their village alive many years ago. Manuel remembers those days well as a young boy himself. But life is normal for him anyway. Once a routine is established, life becomes normal and acceptable in any condition.

After an hour’s walking, they arrive at the dried river bed.

“Here it was, son. Seen enough?”

The Typical Day



“Little further, Dad.”

“Why? There’s nothing out here but more desert.”

“I saw lights in this direction every night for several weeks.”

“Now I see why you dragged me out here.”

After another hour, Manuel loses patience. “Miguel, we need to head back, it is going to get late.”

“Just over this hill, Dad. Please.”

“Alright and then that is it.”

They climb the slight incline as Manuel takes a drink. Miguel stops suddenly.

“What is wrong?” Manuel asks Miguel staring into the distance. A large white one-story building is sitting in the middle of the arid desert and is surrounded by a large chain link fence.

“Where are you going?” Manuel asks as Miguel walks towards the building.

“I want to read the sign on the fence.”

“That is someone’s property and looks important. Let us go back home.”

“Just a little closer to read the sign and then back home, I promise.”

Manuel smirks as he nods and they make their way down the hill. The facility looks almost abandoned except for black jeeps parked inside the fence and a helicopter port that is empty. They



can now read the sign: “Petro-Chemical Research Facility. No Trespassing Under Penalty of Law.”

Manuel grabs his son’s shoulder. “Come on,” he says. Miguel turns but looks back at the sign. No words are exchanged as they head home.

As they arrive back at the village, Sarah and Laura greet them with food as they sit down on some old chairs in the main area near the well. Some villagers come out as the evening dies down and gets cooler.

“You boys have an adventure?” Sarah asks.

“We went out to the middle of nowhere,” Manuel replies.

“We did find an oil company, though,” Miguel added.

One of the eldest villagers, Hector Lopez, asks, “An oil company?”

“Not an oil company,” Manuel says. “Or... maybe. I don’t know. Had a sign on the fence that said Petro on it.”

“It had an airport for a helicopter and cars inside of it but no one around,” Miguel explains.

Raul Torres, called ‘Donkey’ the self-subscribed village idiot asks, “How did you know it was an airport for a helicopter?”

The Typical Day



“It had a big H on it, what else could it be? It also said no trespassing,” Manuel says.

“Sounds like you two need to stay away from it,” Sarah says.

“I agree, we should not be near it,” Hector concurs.

“Maybe I should go and take a look,” Donkey offers.

“You are not doing anything of the kind,” Hector tells him.

Donkey looks down and walks off in a sulk.

Miguel looks over at Laura sticking her tongue out at him but quickly looks away when he catches her eye. Miguel shakes his head and looks back at the villagers. “That must have been the cause of the lights I saw in that direction the other night.”

“Lights?” asks one villager.

“Yes, I have noticed lights out in that direction for long times most nights,” Miguel explains.

Sarah looks down at Laura sticking her tongue out at Miguel and taps her on the shoulder. She looks up and says, “Well, that must be what it is.”

“I don’t know. It will just have to remain a mystery,” Manuel says with a smile. “Good evening all. Thanks for the food, Sarah.”

“You are welcome, Mr. Ortiz.”

As everyone disbands, Miguel looks over at Laura staring at him. He sticks his tongue out and she looks shocked.

Sarah seeing this, smiles. “Come on, little lady.”



Miguel catches up with his dad as they make it indoors. Miguel sits at the table and thinks quietly while Manuel sits down and works on his goat invention. As he polishes part of it he asks, “What is wrong, son?”

“Just thinking about that oil company out there.”

“None of our business, Miguel.”

“Yes, sir. Can I go stare at the stars? It is dark now.”

“Not too late okay?”

“Yes, Dad.” Miguel happily leaves to go to his favorite place on the rocks where he can see the village in the distance. The warm light of oil-based lamps glows and slowly turn out as the night progresses and it gets late. The light of the sun has long faded and stars now dominate the sky. Miguel stares at the constellation Southern Cross that shines in all its glory.



The Rival

Manuel is talking with several villagers about creating a new animal pen when Zane Flores walks up to inject himself into the meeting. Zane is the only son of Zora, widow, and woman of questionable character. Her apparent lack of morals has manifested in her son who feels he is better qualified to run everything in the village. As much as Manuel tries to keep him at bay he interferes. “What are we talking about?” says Zane.

Manuel replies, “Hi Zane, we are talking about building an extra animal pen.”

“Why do we need that?”

“Well, some of the animals are developing issues with one another, being in the same area. Some are causing issues in the group.”

“I haven’t seen any issues. You sure about this?”

“Quite. Apparently, if you get certain leader types together, they clash. Best to keep them apart so they can do their own thing.”

“Maybe you should just trust nature to pick a winner.”

“It does not always pick the right one – just the meanest.”



“I see. So, you think that the weak leader should still run his own pen despite his lack of ability to do it?”

“I am saying for the better of the majority of animals, the right leader needs to have a chance to keep a sane, peaceful herd.”

“I don’t agree.”

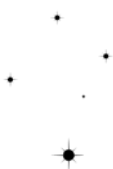
“What about you guys, build the new pen or not?” Manuel asks the two other villagers, who nod, causing Zane to walk off in a huff.

“Why does he always have to be like that?” one villager asks Manuel.

“He needs his own pen,” Manuel observes drily.

The men leave as Manuel goes to their collective stack of wood to work on a new pen. As he digs holes for the fence, he looks over at the traveling teacher who has arrived to teach the kids of the village. Miguel is very attentive and always trying to better himself with education. Manuel watches with pride. As much as he tries to keep Miguel with him, he knows his son is not meant for this life. It bothers him yet it gives a slight sense of hope for better things. Maybe Miguel can fulfill a life he could never have.

Manuel looks over to Zane’s home and Zane stands there with several people he hangs around with. A look of contempt is on his



The Rival



face as he watches Manuel work. Deep in the pit of his stomach, Manuel knows he must deal with Zane. It is the nature of things.





Southern Cross

What happens when all the stars above are wrong and the earth below is out of place? For Miguel a young boy from a poor village in Mexico, he dreams of being an astronomer someday. That dream seems as distant as the moon is from the earth, yet opportunity can come in ways never expected. Miguel knows that as long as he keeps a good idea of where he is, the truth of life will reveal itself. Join Miguel in an adventure that will take him to places he never thought he would be.



Since his teenage years, Mike Sims has been the ultimate story-teller, creating written works of art of all types. He has built a following on social media entertaining people with his never-ending and unique brand of humor. Working tirelessly behind the scenes writing jokes for morning radio personalities to professional comedians. His work has caught the attention of Hollywood producers and marketing professionals across various industries from commercials to infomercials and everything in between. His passion for storytelling has led him to publish his work and bringing what he hopes is helpful and entertaining literature to the world.



Mazzaroth