

Printing
Error
Correction

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Trujillo
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THE
COLLEC
TORS

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STORIES

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Dear Reader,

A number of copies of *The Collectors* printed with an error that affected "La Concha" by e.E. Charlton-Trujillo. If your copy has page 180 (from a different story) instead of page 170, please accept our apologies for the printing error. Page 170 appears as it should on the following page of this PDF.

Take care,

**Andrew Karre
Senior Executive Editor
Dutton Books**

She says, “Can I?” motioning to listen to it.

And I say, “Yes,” and for a moment I imagine the waves of the Gulf crash over me. Then she places it to my ear.

“What do you hear?” she asks.

Seagulls. Laughter. Splashing. Crackling of charcoal. Swing chains squeaking. Laughter. Swing chains wailing. Breathing. Ice in a glass. Glass screaming and—

I pull the concha away.

We’re sitting on my bed. The closet is closed. Key in the lock.

“You okay?” she asks.

“I . . . think you should go,” I say, walking to my door. “He doesn’t like people in His house.”

“Okay. Yeah. Um. Yeah.”

I follow her downstairs and open the front door.

She stops with both feet on the WELCOME HOME mat. She hands me a two-dollar bill marked in black permanent ink: *Merry Christmas! Love U 4 Ever, Josie.*

“For your jars.”

“Thanks.”

She steps back and onto the circle driveway. Tie still crooked.

I pretend I can chase after her and recite poetry like Elote Man might. That I can explain to her that I want to protect her from my dead mother and my hole-digging brother and my stepfather’s giant feet, and my nightmares. The truth is I can’t shield her from anything that is real or pretend because in the end they aren’t that different from each other.

Just remember. You are always you. You always gotta remember that was the last thing my sister said before she left for work on a Friday when she never worked on Fridays except once.