



THE
FIELDSTONE
REVIEW

ISSUE 1, 2006

Editors' Note

Holly Luhning and David Craig Hutton

Literary journals should be original and intellectually fulfilling. In this progressive online format, we hope that TFR adheres to this basic credo. As the journal evolves we will strive to include more multimedia aspects to each issue, such as audio and visual recordings, photography, and other visual art. TFR began, in part, to bring together emerging and established writers and thinkers. With this, our first issue, we think we have achieved our goal. In our first edition you will find work from artists such as Jeanette Lynes and Glen Sorestad alongside pieces by promising writers like Alison Frost and Dianne Miller. You'll also find reviews of books emerging from some of Canada's innovative small presses. We anticipate that TFR will be a long-lasting place for development, a forum to expose writers from diverse backgrounds to a creative format to showcase their work, and a place for discussion, ideas, and growth.

Enjoy the first issue,

Holly Luhning (Editor-in-Chief)

David Hutton (Managing Editor)

Poetry & Prose

Three Triolets For A Friend Trying Out Internet Dating Jeanette Lynes

1. She Is Enamored

Beware the K-Mart of the heart --
The digital man reads you poems
over the phone? *Duh*. Please be smart,
beware the K-Mart of the heart;
he saw your post, he lyres his part --
he could be spawn of garden gnomes.
Beware! The K-Mart of the heart,
the digital man. Read this poem!

2. She Is Less Enamored

Is he a serial killer?
You flew to his ranch for dinner,
quite the spread, the music "Thriller."
Is he a serial killer?
He'd pictured, this rich oil driller,
you thinner, more of a winner.
Is he a serial killer?
You flew to his ranch for dinner.

3. She Is Hungry, Not Enamored In The Least

It's too bloody complicated --
you're on a diet now, but still,
the rancher was over-rated.
It's too bloody complicated.
He deemed your flesh fat, ill-fated;
The thought of him now tastes like swill.
It's too bloody complicated!
You're on a diet now, but, *still*...

**Roller Boogie [Wheelies Roller Rink, 1982]
Kimmy Beach**

I park *Fernando* my '67 Ford
Falcon Station Wagon (black
where it's not rusted)
in the lot next to *London Bunny*, Susan's '78 Nova
the place is full of muscles and beater wagons
idling revving cars full of teenagers
smoking drinking beer
I walk right past the lineup at the door
skates tossed over my shoulder
call *Hi Scott!* over everyone's heads
he buzzes me in through the lobby doors
I don't have to pay I work here

(I used to work concession but not anymore
everybody starts back there up to your neck
in burnt butter and spilled pop syrup
or worse spraying
that deodorant shit into sweaty rental skates
I like to dry-mop after the skaters have left
and sometimes Scott will let me change the record
now that I'm eighteen my favourite job is
Skate Cop I have a whistle
I blow when someone cuts across the rink or speed
-skates on kid's skate you could get hurt or run into
a kid if you start going the wrong direction just to be an
asshole you get whistled and there's no food on the rink
if something spills you can trip on that)

I'm not working tonight
tonight I'm here to skate
my hair is curled and fragranced
with *White Shoulders*
my *Beatlemania* T-shirt tight over my breasts
Susan's already out there she sees me
from the rink and waves
Keith and Darren are playing foosball
near the skate rental booth

I never wore rentals bought my own
skates before I ever set foot on the rink
taught myself to skate backwards
in our big unfinished basement
avoided the drains where concrete dipped

mom's stocking feet overhead creaking on boards
from living room to kitchen
technopop on my cheap cassette player
turned up scratchy and distorted

wearing rentals is like wearing
tape on your glasses
the fuzziest boot covers in the world can't hide
dirty orange rental wheels
the feel of other people's sweat
moving into your socks

Scott spins *Celebration* by Kool and the Gang
Susan flirts with Chris
spins and skates backwards
constantly touching her
hair to keep it out of her eyes

I wave at Brian and Jackie sitting in the hard
orange booths along the edge of the rink
sipping Coke through straws
eating two-day-old popcorn
wrinkled wieners
Scott glides out of the office
his whistle on a chain around his neck
he's nearly two feet taller than me
his skates on and me still in shoes

see you for slow skate he says
that's his supper break
Chris will take over changing
the records so Scott can dance with me
I ask for *Cool Change* by Little River Band
and the Eagles *I Can't Tell You Why*
you got it he kisses the top of my head
skates to the DJ booth

Living on Video by Trans-X pumps
electronic from speakers
and on the rink
a parade of bell-bottoms widened
extra denim pieces added head after head of waving
feathered hair home perms
blonde highlights blue
sparkle eye shadow long chains on the boys
Nazareth T-shirts polyester and shoulder pads

I throw my denim jacket and Nikes into a locker
pin the key to the back pocket
of my brand-new Fancy Ass jeans
carry my skates to a red carpeted bench
breeze from my friends' revolutions
stirs my hair at the rinkside

my skates are white Sure-Grip high-tops
plate model Century Super X5L
with Precision Bearing wheels
they've got split leather linings, adjustable
trucks, and axles that won't lose it
when they're cranked wide open
I keep the axles oiled,
my toe stops tight, and my trucks
loose for better cornering
first thing I did was replace the factory Sure-Grip
wheels with top of the line All-American Dreams
those are the hottest wheels for 1982
it was worth the extra bucks I spent
for the looks I get from the guys
envious glares from girls
lots of them have All-American Plus
they're an okay wheel but
a solid step down from the Dreams
give you smooth ride and speed

I don't wear my
boot covers I like the beat-up look
of my skates the laces
have made black grooves in the leather
scuffs and wrinkles show I'm serious
not afraid to enter the speed skate contest
or dance with Chris, the best waltzer at the rink

I'd like to be skating with Darren I want the rough
look of my skates to match his
I glide to the can
my jeans are too new but otherwise
I'm looking good
my hair is perfect
straight at the back feathered sides
put on some Chocolate Lip Smackers
tuck the tube into my back pocket

I wait for Susan to come around
take two spins with her while I look for Darren
blue plastic floor worn under our wheels
red brick and dark orange walls
the disco ball spinning under a bank
of speakers at the centre

Katie is crying in the back corner again
Barb holding her shoulders
Darren's an asshole, Katie
you should break up with him
she won't do it
they've been having the same conversation
every night for three weeks
Katie and Darren fight a lot
but they always make up

as I round the next corner I see
Darren at the DJ booth talking to Scott
who's just put on *Rapture* by Blondie
Darren's been outside for a du Maurier
when I ride up next to him
he smells of tobacco and cool rain

I spin backwards, catch his eye,
and tilt my head at him
he joins me and we dance to the hot sounds
chatting about nothing
his new wheels I don't watch behind me
pull my hair behind my ears
he guides me occasionally
around slow skaters touching the hip
of my jeans to shift me over

My family gives me prizes for my birthday
Heidi Greco

They know that I have everything
I could ever need, so instead
they give me flowers, in bunches, tied with ribbons.
Others by the bucketful, picked with love and scissors
scouted from the backyard in between the springtime rains.
Daffodils and lilacs, a vase of rainbowed tulips, softening
and floppy as cottontail ears.

Some
are even store-bought. Colourful *gerberas*,
leggy babies slooped in plastic straws. A blooming
African violet I will surely kill by June.

I have roomfuls of bouquets: mums with green salal,
leaves for every year of joy, buds to mark the tears.
But mostly cheery blossoms -- yellow, lots of orange
sunny colours to brighten the house, souvenirs of all
the noise and mess when they were small, reminders
how they brought me love, even then, in droopy clumps
dandelions, spilling out
from tiny sweated fists.

Sprawl
Mike Barnes

Is there time for a small poem just now,
amid the numb or frenzied packing, the voices sounding
last-call? If so, here's one. You and I
speeding down off the Barrie snow plains
back to Toronto, cresting one of those long familiar hills
you said, "The sprawl," and then I saw it:
a vast fretwork of lights shimmering
to the horizon, unfurling
an umbrella of glow in miles of milky haze.
A city. Our city. It spelled us
with its intricacy, blithe power and extent,
and to think, we gushed in our speeding
black capsule down again, not even the smallest of the gleams
not planned, manufactured, installed and kept lit
by someone. We drove under that aura,
blinking up at it like mice at the Milky Way,
but Russian-dolled inside our awe
was the fact that "the sprawl," the phrase itself,
came from a novel we'd both read and loved.

That, too,
invoked a galaxy behind the rock, a sprawl inside the sprawl.

Orange Light
Mike Barnes

Propped up on high white pillows
in the bed, he said:

I remember visiting her studio
that first time. Four floors up,
cold water down the hall.
I had to climb up the fire escape
because of another painter.
Dusty beams and ducts
criss-crossed the high brickwork,
and orange light seemed
always to be roaring
through the grimy, fretted windows.
Her fingers were always caked
with pigments-chrome yellows, whitesand
I remember thinking fleetingly,
I'll die of lead poisoning.

But you didn't, I remarked.
One of his daughters had come in
and asked if he needed anything
and when he said no
had kissed him on the forehead.

Well it wasn't for lack of trying,
he said smiling to himself.

Presences/Absences
Glen Sorestad

What matters most
is the comfort
I know
because you
are here,

but even more
the knife
of fear I know
your absence
would bring.

Morning Declaration
Glen Sorestad

This morning the northwester is a blustery declarative sentence replete with clausal gusts and punctuated with rainy exclamations.

The golf course is a silent thought; even omnipresent Canada geese have opted not to declare their plaintive intent,

gone to shelter somewhere beyond their utterance. Trees shake their leaves like pompom quotation marks.

Those in subordinate servitude to dogs have been taken out, thoroughly awakened and returned safe to their warm homes.

Only my partner and I, who insist on our fitness imperative, lean, two slashes into the rain and follow our syntactical route home.

Mrs. Parker Has Accidents
Jenny Ryan

Sometimes her soul
slides out
like the hem of a slip
hanging,
glimpsed.

Sloppy, but sexy
a bra strap
she doesn't tuck in
right away.

Postures, 5
Lindsay Zier-Vogel

Posture One:

He stands with a sleeping spine,
a small and careful curve
that rounds itself like empty fingers from an unused palm.

Posture Two:

Thighs cross at knees
and his shoulders angle - south-west, north-east,
a pointed compass
with confused vertebrae falling somewhere underneath.

Posture Three:

Straight as a street,
laid in naked instead of asphalt,
he divides the mattress in equal triangles
and sleeps the morning's earliest light in two.

Posture Four:

Hands fit into pockets
as they fit into hands,
knees straight as elbows,
the only horizontal lines are his belt,
and his collarbone,
the rest track sky to ground,
north to south
and straight as untangled yarn.

Posture Five:

The back of the chair holds his head

and his feet (sandaed)
angle in sharp creases from the table
that holds both of our drinks.

The visit
Dianne Miller

I come to the cemetery
ironically, metonymically
named Mount Hope.
I can't remember where she's buried
though my mother showed me once--
Not on the hilltop where one son sleeps
beside his first wife, his second wife
beside her first husband close by.
Farther on, I pass the tombstone of his lover
Such a cozy place, all these stories
leaching from bones, draining into silence.

I find her at the bottom--my grandmother-at
the bottom of Mount Hope,
beside him of whom little was spoken
(in the end they had to watch him every minute
for fear he'd shoot them all).
I've come to ask her advice-this woman whose doleful eyes
reach beyond a faded photograph, all I have of hers--
That, and the farm I've just inherited,
the one she inherited from her father, and he from his.
I'm guessing she knows a lot, having lived
there as a girl, nursed her dying brother,
taken her chances with a man who once
tore an owl out of the sky with his whip.

At home she birthed a daughter, two sons,
taught them
'the less you have
the less you have to do'.
Must have seemed odd,
a scarcity of everything but choresmilking,
haying, planting, weeding, milking...

Today is hot and muggy.
Crickets sing.
Beside her grave, pale pink roses
planted in love or out of duty,
sun not quite burning through a veil of clouds

vale of tears, voila, voile, voy elle
I stand at the bottom of Mount Hope
at my grandmother Oradell's grave
and wait.

Just Another Story About Billy the Kid
Jan Conn

Through the ornate ceiling he shoots some bullets.
The sky is very yellow; sun indigo.
Puts his gun in his belt, whirls his peculiar hat
through the air.

Uncoiling as they go, garter snakes shed their luminous skins
and one by one depart their communal den.

Night flies past. He puts his face
perpendicular to this century and weeps.

A small explosion occurs behind a black door, then another.
When he sleeps he dreams of his former wives naked
in the dark, leaping from wildflower to wildflower.

He keeps lightning in a bottle, is stoked before evening.
Like a magnet he gathers action
and beautiful red-haired girls, their fizzed hair.

Self-Portrait
Francine Sterle
(Toulouse-Lautrec)

I disappear into the streets with my wide behind
and a nose like a potato. Only in Montmartre's
dance halls and dens does no one notice
a dwarf with drooling lips and a lisp.
Walking these rat-infested streets all night,
night after night, I drag my friends from the cabarets
to the circus to the cafés, move from light to light,
port to brandy, gin to vermouth.
It's in the brothels that I feel at home.
8 Rue d'Amboise. 24 Rue des Moulins.
The *égout des spermes*. Outcasts like myself.
Black-stockinged legs. Mouths red as a drip of blood.
Ingres believed the only way to possess a woman
was to paint her, and I want to paint every woman I see.
Look at them: naked and stretched out like animals.

They admit me everywhere and at any moment.
I watch them dressing or touching or taking a bath.
I'm a coffee pot with a big spout.
I'm digging my grave with my cock.
Degas thinks my work stinks of the pox,
but I draw what I see: a woman making a bed
or brushing her hair, someone talking in the salon,
playing cards, humming a song.
When they lie down together, you've never seen
such tenderness. They're like two birds
burying themselves in each others' feathers.
No one will ever love me like that.

Landlorn
Karen McElrea

Poor little mermaid,
wishing so hard
so long;
all she wanted
was to get out
of her wet things,
to get something
dry in her.

Utterly sick of fish and greens
in dreams she sank
her teeth into meals
still dotted with
bits of land,
a gristly something
that bled
down her chin.

She floated under her
tiresome stars, resenting
the intimacy of tides;
she stared up at the sky
and wondered what grass
would feel like, what a man's
hand would feel like, how she
would feel were she warm and real.

She appealed to the networks,
but the camera couldn't catch her;

their instruments failed
to register her soundings
so the mermaid went back
and sank deep,
resurfacing to lie cold
on her rock awhile

with the gods--who were,
after all, just gods--
bobbing around her;
those slippery gods
who looked away
as she dragged a blade down her tail,
and winced
when she didn't bleed.

Hello
Alison Frost

AUDREY DATES MURPHY in a city far from home. They often go down to the docks past midnight in this foggy city that smells unclean. There are ratty Christmas garlands on icy benches flanking a dirty white lighthouse.

It's blistering cold, but they stand there stubbornly. They've been standing there for a while, staring out at the floating ice and chunky black waves, recovering from a long argument that's worn them out.

Murphy has his arms wrapped around his chest, watching to see how long she'll stare at the dirty white paint of the lighthouse and the graffiti. It's back to zero. She's not budging. It's been a long, cold night.

Audrey always reads the graffiti. In bathrooms, subways, alleyways. Sometimes she records things in a notebook he never gets to read. Here, amongst the illegible scrawling, there's a big heart shakily rendered on the rough surface. Inside it says: JERRY AND FELICIA TOGETHER 4 EVER! It makes her feel lonely, but she won't budge.

Let's smoke this thing, he says at last. She shrugs, so he goes ahead and unwraps his arms. He finds the lighter in his jacket pocket and lights the joint he rolled in the van and has been clutching in his hand this whole time. The lighter makes a fierce red spot in the grey air. They each have a few tokes. It looks like it'll snow.

This is ridiculous, Murphy says cheerfully. *Let's talk about something. Anything! Tell me something about yourself. Something I don't know yet. Something I'll never know unless you tell me right now.* It's a stretch -- trying to get her to let it all go and just be normal.

You really want to know? She says flatly.

Of course I really want to know.

Example? Audrey is curt.

Okay. He expects this. He passes her the joint and exhales. So I have a recurring dream about swing sets. I've never told anyone before.

What kind of swing sets?

Your average children's swing sets, he says. I'm stuck on one. Can't get off the fucking thing.

Dream or nightmare?

Nightmare! Isn't that fucked up? He laughs, then draws hard on the joint. He pauses and looks out into the white night.

What about you? he says. Dreams? Nightmares? Hopes? Fears? Secrets? She makes him wait a long time for the answer.

I collected postcards as a child, but I stopped. My favourite movies are Mary Poppins and The Shining. How's that?

Come on, he laughs. You can do better than that.

She thinks for a while, starting to enjoy the smell of the pot.

Okay. How's this? Someone got mugged next door to our cabin in the middle of the winter and came to us for help. It looked like this outside only with more snow. Tonnes more snow. I was just a kid. I must have been like seven or eight ... I remember we were listening to Lionel Ritchie. My dad made us hold barbeque forks for self-defence.

Hang on. Back to Lionel for a second. Were you dancing on the ceiling? Murphy laughs uncomfortably before examining the joint and offers her a last haul before tossing it into the dark water.

She looks at him flatly.

No, seriously, that is freaky, he offers.

No kidding, she says. Actually, "Hello" was my song of choice.

Ahhh, "Is it me you're looking for?"

Exactly, she says, with the slightest grin.

Now we're getting somewhere, he thinks. The water in front of them is slapping against itself, against the dock, invisible at times under the shifting fog. Behind them it slides up the shore and headlights creep along the road picking out their two figures on the dock, illuminating them momentarily, leaving them again in the dark.

So, what happened? he finally asks.

We never heard, she says. At least I never heard.

They stand in silence for a long while. Murphy hones in on the sounds of the swooshing traffic far behind them.

How about this, she says, pointing to the heart on the lighthouse. What can you do with this?

It is his turn to pause and make her wait.

Ah, I was waiting for you to ask, Murphy says. Obviously this inscription is old, he begins. These folks aren't kids anymore. They wrote this when they were in high school. Now they are in their thirties--late thirties, he offers. They live in the city still, where they have lived all their lives. She is a teacher. He is a ... dentist. No, maybe a psychiatrist.

It's something Audrey and Murphy started to play months ago, watching people – or more often, traces of people -- guessing who they were, what they were thinking, where they came from. This was a good sign, Audrey starting this tonight. Audrey liked this game. It made her feel good and safe to be a couple with rituals.

So where are Jerry and Felicia tonight?

Tonight? Ah, well she's pregnant ... with their third child. The first two are twins. She's at home. The kids dream about math because they are both sort of geniuses. They home-school.

Of course they home-school!

Jerry is out getting drunk with his friends because he's seen so many schizophrenics today his head is spinning.

Okay, Audrey says. I'll buy that. But she's feeling dizzy and very cold now.

Let's just go home, she says. She is starting to shiver uncontrollably.

No, no. Hang on. Your turn. He smiles.

No, let's just go.

Just a quick one. What do you see when you look into their heart? He points to the scratching on the lighthouse. What do you see for Jerry and Felicia?

No. I don't want to.

She is silent for a long while, staring blankly forward.

Come on. He smiles, reaching around her shoulder and rubbing her arm to warm her up. What is Felicia doing right now? Sleeping? Sitting up listening to Lionel Ritchie? Audrey says nothing.

Come on, Aud. He tightens his arm around her enthusiastically. Whatta ya got? Play the game -- You started it. Plus, I have "Hello" running through my head, thanks to you.

Fine. She begins calmly, feeling around inside herself for the story. Felicia is a thin woman, even though she is pregnant. She is one of those slim pregnant women with just a perfect ball of baby. But she has a red face. Round. Bulbous even. And you are right ... she's listening to music. Let's go with that.

Uh, huh ... go on.

That's all I got. She opens her palms to the skies in defeat.

Come on, Audrey. Tell me, what makes this woman tick? He tries to wrap his arms around her from behind.

And then we can go? She shrugs him off. He nods.

Once upon a time Felicia and Jerry went away for a weekend to a little motel up in the hills. In the daytime they went skiing, played around on the hills. After a dinner of cheese fondue and Caesar salad they went for a walk in the snow, and then, in the middle of the well-lit parking lot, they got mugged at gunpoint. Let's say Felicia was even violently raped at gunpoint and never recovered and we'd better, therefore, scrap the children. They couldn't have children and Jerry resented her for the rest of their lives.

Intense, he says. Nicely done.

No, not nice. She shrugs his arm violently off her. Maybe they live in a bad part of town and never go on vacation anymore and she won't leave the house, which, incidentally, has a brown shag rug, which is always a little damp, and - and - and -and -

She flaps her hands around looking for the words. *And they are both fucking miserable because she is afraid all the time and because they're trapped in this --this fucking thing and he helps everyone recover ... except*

Hey, whoa ... slow down, Aud.

Maybe she is super crazy ... and maybe Jerry is about to leave her because she just keeps wishing they had never gone for a walk.

Audrey turns on him with all the pent up fury of their evening, her face blotchy red and white, her eyes baggy and verging on tears.

You're just feeling paranoid. You're fine ... I'm here. Audrey? I'm sorry, I shouldn't have brought the pot.

Audrey is staring out into the white sky, feeling herself get very still. Murphy puts his arm around her again. Nothing. His arm feels weightless on her, like things do when you are numb with cold. She hears the little noises, the familiar buzzing, the little waves, the little loose waves of thought, of plastic hitting plastic, of crunching and outdoor rustling, of things that might be about to happen, the kind that makes you look behind you in a panic on a well-lit city street. Things shaped in ice and snow that make you scared of windows.

Murphy stands somewhere in Audrey's peripheral vision for a small eternity, before she hears his voice. It's started to snow. It seems like it should snow very hard.

Hey, Aud? Sweetie? You okay? You're just not feeling well. Everything's cool. You're just feeling crazy from the pot. It's cool. Do you want to head back?

Just ... just stop it. I'm fine. I'm cold. I'm fine.

He holds her more tightly and she shivers uncontrollably. She feels his cold fingers gently tuck into her coat sleeve and find their way to the skin of her wrist. Audrey looks up and stares across the water and the two of them are silent again, as his fingers stay and seem to melt on her skin.

They begin the walk back to the van. He holds her tightly and they move as one figure slowly along the dock away from the open water.

Are you okay, now? he asks. *Are you okay? I lost you there for a bit.*

I'm fine, she says. *Can we just not talk?* She concentrates on emptying her thoughts, pouring them out to be lost in this big, cold space.

Aud ...

Just don't talk and just look at this snow. This is one of my favourite things. It's starting to snow very lightly, just enough to start filling in the dirty footprints on the dock.

2

THE NEXT MORNING the father yanked open the wooden cabin door onto a bright sunny day, waking the three children abruptly from their campout on the living room floor. First with the unlocking and then with the low incoming chill and the light. In the distance was the ski resort, the chairlifts heading steadily, reliably up and down the modest white hills.

Leaving Sundays was usually a big rush, but today the kids were more efficient, more ready to leave. Cale, Elliot and Audrey hauled themselves up off the floor, shivering and squinting, gathered up their bedding without having to be told twice, and headed back down the hallway to their bedroom. The hallway, with its tattered blue runner, always felt cold in the mornings, but that day it was especially so. Audrey found her book on the floor and replaced the bookmark at random. It must have fallen out the night before. She pushed a fading postcard of Orlando, Florida back onto the cedar wall where it was coming un-taped, and dumped her covers onto the bare damp-looking mattress. She dressed quickly, scanned the room like her mother did in hotels for forgotten items of clothing or toys and then returned to the relative warmth of the main room.

The children's three orange toboggans, which they had propped up neatly against the cabin (Audrey knew they had because that is what they always did), were strewn along the path from the front door -- one was all the way up near the car, sparkling with little stars of snow. Two pairs of skis remained propped up in perfect V's, the poles dangling by leather straps off the railing. Only one ski had dropped into the deep snow, cutting a sharp line like a shadow of its twin. Their father asked the boys to bring everything inside before taking the luggage out to the minivan.

Audrey climbed in first. Her parents were putting the last bags in the back. While she clambered into the last row of seats, she heard her mother at the back of the van say quietly to her father that they *should stop by the station -- just to know.*

Audrey spent the first ten minutes of the trip (up through the valley on the steep road, past the narrow unfrozen canal) trying to locate her spot in her book, trying to ignore her brothers' incessant questioning of their parents. Elliot wanted to know where they took the guy. Cale asked if Dad would have killed the guy if he came close. Cale figured he could. Cale sat on the left-hand side in the middle, where he always sat. Elliot, who normally sat on the right side in the middle, chose the middle middle so that he could lean forward into the spot between his parents and take part in the discussion. Their mother asked if his seatbelt was on properly, told him to lean back and sit properly, insisted there was no need to yell, she was right there. Audrey concentrated on her book and its soft pages that smelt of the library, and she did not look back to see their

boathouse on the lake getting smaller from the top of the valley. She did not say, *Bye boathouse, see you in the summer*. Today she clenched the sides of her book trying to read.

Soon they pulled into the crunchy gravel of the police station lot. Audrey finally looked up. She had never noticed it before, but the station had been here by the highway all along, near the fruit stands where they always went, except in the winter when they were dry and empty. Her mother looked back over her seat and asked Audrey if she was okay, *so quiet*. Audrey said she was just reading.

Their parents got out of the van and went into the station together, leaving Cale in charge. The boys convinced Audrey to play "I Spy" with them, but then, on his second turn, Cale said, *I spy the killer!* and Elliot asked him, *Where? Where?* His head darting around like a puppy. Cale explained that they had just missed him, that there was a small jail behind the police station. Audrey saw the horseback riding stables behind the police station. She didn't see anything else. She didn't. She didn't see a jail.

Don't you see the bars? Don't you see him there? She didn't. She just didn't. She saw horseback riding trails and bits of snow blowing sadly over the grass. Their parents returned, walking quickly. Their dad kicked his bulky black winter boots against the fender to get the snow off before climbing into the driver's seat. *Okay, gang, off we go!*

The boys started in with their questions, the two of them vying for that gap in between the front seats. From the back where she always sat, Audrey saw her mother's profile say something to their father. Then he said, *Boys, make sure you're buckled up. Everything is fine. They got the guy and everything is fine*. He looked into his rearview mirror at Audrey and smiled. *Everything all right back there, Aud? We had a late night -- Why don't you tuck in and get a little nap and we'll wake you up for donuts*.

Audrey smiled back, secured her seatbelt, and watched the grass sticking out of the snow on the horseback trails as they headed back into traffic, towards the highway and home.

THE MORNING BEFORE, the kids had been cross-country skiing and tobogganing on the hills that rolled down to the frozen lake. All day the snow had been falling slowly in thick flakes, building up a smooth curve against the window about a quarter of the way up.

Probably this happened. This is likely how the day had been going. But Audrey cannot fully retrieve the events of that day, cannot quite remember what the day was like until the frantic knocking on the window, the crunching of the snow, the three of them running down the hall into the big family room to see their father opening the front door, their mother reaching for the phone. The big room no longer warm, despite the fire. Audrey no longer cozy, but shivering.

AUDREY HAD BEEN almost falling asleep before the people came. Her brothers had been in their bunk beds and Audrey was beside them in her real bed when they heard. Her parents' nightly bath had run its course. The tub had filled, sounding loud and hot, muffling their parents' voices, then there was silence before the guttural emptying and the final swirl of water down the drain. Audrey was reading when they heard the people come. The book was a softcover from the city library. She was drowsy, but she was on the last chapter. The tape deck was on low like they were allowed to have it while they fell asleep.

Somewhere amidst the tinging sound of their father pushing the fire screen right up against the brick to keep the sparks from jumping out and the turning of the soft, worn page, Audrey heard a scraping and shouting. Horrible, repetitious scraping and scrambling.

THE GIRL'S FACE WAS RED and white, unsteady. Red with white blotches, and her hair was long, dark and damp with snow. She was squealing something, but it was muffled by the window pane and by the plastic window covering. The guy was shouting right through the glass, his face white coming out of the black night, the sweat freezing on his hairline. The soft contours of the snowdrift were destroyed, broken and angular. It was still snowing, white flakes dropping into dangerous uneven cavities and broken boot prints.

I'm sorry. I can't let you in. We have children, we can't let you in. We don't know who you are ... I hope you understand. Stay put. We've called the police and they're on their way. Just stay put. It won't be long now ...

That is when their father handed out the long barbeque forks. Even Cale started crying, standing up straight in the moonlight, bare-chested and skinny, pale and afraid in just his pajama bottoms, holding a fork the length of his forearm. There was a scraping sound against the aluminum house siding. The half full wine glasses were still on the card table and mittens were drying by the fire, leftovers of a family's winter holiday weekend, and a little girl fiercely afraid of the night.

WHEN THE POLICE FINALLY ARRIVED, Audrey was standing in pee-soaked flannel pajamas, holding a long-handled barbeque fork. Her father placed the huge kitchen knife on the manteltop before putting on his boots and heavy coat and going out the door. Her mother tightened the belt on her housecoat, explaining to the kids that it was the police and everything would be fine now. Their mother passed two blankets to their father to take to the people. Audrey could feel where the pee had dripped into her sock and it was itchy where it was drying on her calf. The darkness through the windows was replaced now with red lights, a white light darting around quickly. Boots were crunching snow.

When their father opened the door they could see how the police cars were arranged like a fan on the driveway at the top of the steps, lights pouring into the house. The lady was gone. The door closed behind their father walking out with the blankets. Their

mother said, *See, the lady will be safe and warm in the police car.* The boys watched from the window. Audrey tried to see but they were blocking her view. She saw the man wrapping the blanket around himself as the snow fell. She heard him say, *My wife, Felicia.* There were many boots crunching snow and muffled voices and the slamming of car doors.

Eventually the door creaked open, letting in cold air, their father, and a very tall policeman. He was a thick tower of blue and smelled warm to Audrey, like coffee and seatbelt metal in the summer. He seemed warm and strong. There was a gun on his belt, which Cale pointed out to Audrey and Elliot. He was holding a notepad and when he reached for his pen their mother sent them down the hall so the adults could talk. The children didn't go far down the hallway. They tried to listen at the door.

We know who he is. He's a local -- well-known guy -- got his hands on a hunting rifle. Those folks were just out for a nice winter walk. Just walking. It was a well-lit area. Can't place any blame on them.

Then the policeman's voice got very low, almost a whisper. They heard their father's voice, deeper than usual through clenched teeth. *Jezzus. Jesus Christ.*

He forced them down the hill to the lake when he was done, the policeman continued, *must have walked a ways and then clambered all the way back up.*

She'll be fine. Just cold. And bruised of course. And there will be trauma. There always is, but they're pretty lucky as far as things go. They were crouched down behind your toboggans there.

Is there anything at all we can do? I wish we could have let them in, but we have three kids and we didn't know, their mother explained. *You hear so many things.*

Can't say I blame you. You did what you could. We'll take her straight in to get checked out. Course, we'll need your number and address.

Of course, their parents answered in unison.

When they were allowed back into the living room, Audrey asked if they could all sleep together on the floor in front of the fire. They went down the hall to collect their bedding and arranged three cozy sleeping spots in a row in front of the fire. Audrey changed into dry, warm pajamas, and tucked herself safely under the covers in her spot between the long couch and Cale. Their parents said everyone was safe. The doors were locked. It was time to go to sleep.

Their father lowered the blinds and turned off most of the lights, except the yellowish one on top of the piano, and one by the couch. But their parents stayed up for a long

time that night, sitting on the couch, their children between them and the fire, and they drank wine and waited for sleep to descend to the floor. The boys talked about guns for a bit, arguing quietly over the difference between a sawed-off and a rifle and a pistol. Their mother insisted it was late and this was no time to be discussing things like that. They'd all have nightmares. They were supposed to try to think of nice things like Florida and fall asleep.

The boys eventually settled down. The parents sat up quietly. The fire crackled. The parents whispered once or twice. *We'll have to pick up a paper tomorrow*, her mother said. Audrey heard her dad check the doors again and another light went out by the couch, but he sat back down, rested his warm heavy foot against her back and Audrey knew they were both still there and would be until very late, and she fell asleep.

*

THIS IS THE STORY Audrey has settled on, the one beginning with a brief collision of sounds in the winter -- of a word sung and shouted in unison- - a woman calling *Hello*, banging on the window in the winter, and Lionel Ritchie crooning the same word into a child's sleepy mind from a small pink tape deck. The buzzing of an old tape deck and the banging on an old cabin door, so hard the wall seems to tremble. The word *Hello* -- the coincidence -- is what she has left out, the part that doesn't ring true, doesn't fit in. The part that is too hard to explain.

*

IT WAS IN THE NEWS the next day. They were at home in the city watching TV when their mother came in with the paper. The boys scrambled for it. She said there was no need to make such a fuss. Not to scare Audrey.

She was raped, Elliot yelled. *That lady was raped! What does that mean? She's still in hospital too.* Audrey curled her feet up onto the couch, warming them under her bum. She concentrated on the television, on *Mary Poppins*, the part with the tea party on the ceiling.

Is she dead? Elliot grabbed at the paper.

Boys! Stop grabbing! Their mother's voice rose suddenly in a slight panic. Then it returned to normal. *It means he hurt her because he is sick. But things are okay now. The lady is fine now.*

The boys kept talking. Audrey turned to them with her hands pressed against her ears and shouted. *This is my favourite part! Be quiet! You know this is my favourite part!*

Chill, Audrey. Jeez. What's your problem? Cale and Elliot laughed as they left the room. The jolly old man floated up to the ceiling of a dining room in London and poured the tea for the little girl in the blue outfit.

You know, Martin, Audrey heard her mother say before dinnertime. It must be the same guy. Remember when the Dwights' son came up to the motel from the docks with his clothes wet and claimed to have lost the canoe. Someone found him hiding out behind the pool shed. He wouldn't speak and his mother had to come and ask him what happened to his friend. That must've been him. They had him in an institution after that - in Thunder Bay I think.

Jesus. Hate to be the bloody fool who decided he could go. On the other side of the half-closed door Audrey heard her father toss down the paper. Can I get you a drink? he said to his wife. Audrey, shivering in the evening shade of the dining room, was concentrating on each soft page of her book, passing the time until dinner.

Why Jesus Santos Didn't Lose His Faith

Leslie Wayne Jones

Although I am only sixteen years old, I have a story that no one has ever told before. A lot of people won't believe me, but it's true. It is the story of my life, the life of Jesus Santos.

Every story should have a beginning. Mine has none. I was born, I think, in Sonora, Mexico. But when I was still a baby, some guy--maybe my father--brought me and my mother to live in Arizona. Then he left us here, or else he died. When I ask my mother to explain, she says, "There is nothing to explain. Everything happens for a reason." So as far as I know, my life begins with my first memories, when I was four years old.

People tell me I was a very strange kid. Even my mother says it. We lived together in the little house she still rents from my Tio Eduardo. All day, she says, she would hear me through the door, talking in my room. She used to think I was alone, but I was talking with God. We hung out together, and if I ever got bored, God would make up something to do. Like one summer there was a monsoon rain, so we were stuck in the house. God said, "Go look outside," so I went to the window. And God said, "Look at the river I just made in the yard. When the rain stops, let's go fishing." After that, whenever it rained really hard, we waited until it stopped, and then we went fishing in the biggest puddle on the block.

Sometimes the whole street filled like a big muddy sink with water from the rain, and I would fish off the curb. There was a boy a few years older than me who lived next door. His name was Danny Romero. One day he saw me and he said, "What do you think you're doing, kid?"

So I told him.

"Don't be a *guey*," he said. Then he went into his house and he didn't talk to me no more that day. God told me he wasn't ready yet, but this boy was going to be my best friend. Then a few days later, when he came home from school, he saw me sitting on his front steps. He said, "You going to get out of my way? Or do I have to step on you?"

I didn't say nothing.

"What are you so happy about?" he said. He looked down at me for a long time. Then he said, "Hey, kid. Do me a favor. Next time you go fishing, sell me a fish."

When I shook my head, he didn't like that.

"What's the matter?" he said. "I'm not good enough to buy your stinking fish, which you made up in your crazy head?"

I said I had to feed my mother, but he could come over and eat with us.

"*Orale, que no?*" he said. But after that he really liked me. He stopped calling me *tonto* and *guy*. My real name is Jesus, so he called me Chuy--the nickname for Jesus. It sounds like Chewy. And that's what everybody started calling me. But Danny was the first.

Pretty soon it was Danny and me together all the time, just as God said it was going to be. God gave me Danny for a friend, and then He went away. I didn't hear His voice no more, and He didn't hang out at my house. Anyway, I was always too busy at Danny's place. He lived with his mother and father. His big brother, Oscar, was in the Marines, so Danny had his own room. One time his mother showed me a picture of Oscar. She said he was a sergeant already, and Danny said he didn't talk about nothing else except the Marines.

That Christmas, Oscar came home and Danny was right. Every time I saw him, he kept telling me what it means to be a Marine. He explained it this way. He said if anybody ever hurt him or they tried to hurt his family, all of the guys he knew in the Marines would go over to the guy's house, and they would beat his ass bloody. And if some *pinche vaboso* was to hurt another Marine, or if he raped the Marine's sister or his girlfriend or his mother, Oscar would find that guy and kill him. And then he'd go after the guy's whole family and kill everybody, even his cousins and his dog.

"Being a Marine," Oscar said, "it's like being Catholic. Once you join, they got you for life."

"Did you make that up?" Danny said.

I think he was tired of hearing about Marines. We were all in the bedroom, the one he used to share with Oscar. Danny was sipping a beer and I had a soda, but Oscar was drinking scotch.

"I got to go," said Danny. "I got to go see Lenora. I'll be back in an hour."

"Hey, you only need an hour?" Oscar said, and that made Danny laugh on his way out. I started getting up to leave, but Oscar told me to stay. He said, "You got any brothers?" I shook my head, and then he said, "Now you do," and he slapped my knee.

Then he made me a promise. He said he would teach me everything about women.

"I have come to learn," Oscar said, "that not all women are the same, even though they act alike most of the time. See, there are four types."

So I asked him, what types?

"I'm going to tell you," said Oscar, and he poured a little whiskey into my soda can. "They range from short to tall, fat to skinny, dumb to smart, sane to insane. In other words, Chuy, there are all kinds of women, which makes tracking down your other half kind of difficult--"

By the time Danny got back, Oscar was really into it. He kept telling stories all about women, and drinking whiskey from the bottle. Then he said he didn't care that Danny was a pain in his ass, he really loved his little brother. He said, "If anyone tried to hurt Danny, they're dead. It's that simple. *Dead.*"

I didn't say nothing, I was so happy just to be there with such great guys. I wasn't ready when Oscar asked me if I had a girlfriend.

"He don't have a girlfriend," Danny said. "He's too young."

"Bull shit," Oscar said. "There ain't no such thing." But when he looked at me some more, I think he changed his mind. "Anyway," he said, "you got a mother, right?"

"Leave him alone," Danny said. "He's just a kid."

"Hey, kid," said Oscar. "You think your mother's always going be there for you?" He shook his head. Then he looked over at Danny. "You listening to me, *suave?*"

Danny turned to the wall. "You drink too much" was all he said.

"You can't count on *nothing*," Oscar told me. "Some day your mother won't be there. Say you get married. And your wife likes somebody better and she takes your kid and she leaves. Where you going to look for them, man? Which way did they go?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"There's only one thing that lasts forever, man. And it ain't your girlfriend. Tell him, Danny."

"The Marines," Danny said. He was pretty pissed at his brother, but he didn't say why. And I didn't figure it out until later on.

Danny had a girlfriend. She grew up in Texas, but a couple years ago she moved here with her mother. All the teachers called her Sylba because that's what it said in the computer, but her real name was Lenora, and that's what we called her. She had long black hair that grew down to her butt. But while she was talking, she used to raise it up off her neck. She'd hold it like a cat's tail and stick it on top of her head, or toss it over her shoulder. Sometimes I could hardly understand what she was saying, my eyes were so busy watching her hair move around.

Danny was crazy about her. He said they were getting married after they graduated in the spring. He talked about her all time until one day, and then he didn't talk about her no more. If I even brought up Lenora, he'd changed the subject. He'd talk about me and Carla instead. He'd say, "What would you do if some guy tried to fuck around with Carla? You wouldn't take it, right?"

Carla was just a girl at school. She was a couple of years older than me. I was just a freshman, but she sat in my morning class because she kept flunking history. There was no one else her age, so she talked to me. And sometimes we hung out after school, but Carla had a boyfriend. I never met him, but she always made me leave when she got a call on her cell, and I figured it was him and he was for real.

Anyway, she was the Carla that Danny meant. He said if any guy tried to bother her, and if I asked him for help, he would go after that guy. He would handle it for me because by then we were like brothers.

All this happened the year of Desert Storm. Oscar got sent to Iraq, and everybody was really scared for him. When he sent home letters, Danny used to read them in the kitchen, and his mom always cried, but his father didn't say nothing but his face got so dark I couldn't even see what he looked like anymore.

Then, about a month later, Oscar came home. He flew back to Tucson, to Davis-Monthon, the Air Force base. Everybody was real happy and saying how glad they were that the war was over. "It ain't over," Oscar said, but he didn't explain. I stayed for dinner that night because Danny's mother asked me. I felt sorry for her. She wouldn't even sit at the table. She just kept getting more food the whole time while Oscar talked about the bombs and the bodies. His father was in Vietnam, so after awhile he had to leave the room. Then nobody talked any more, but after dinner, we went into Danny's room, and that's when Oscar told us the truth.

He said he was only in combat for four days. "Four fuckin days, man!" He didn't kill nobody. He didn't hurt nobody. He was real depressed.

When Oscar was growing up, he was the fattest kid in school. "He was a real freak," Danny said. "When he was fourteen, he weighed, like three hundred pounds. He couldn't bend down. I had to tie his shoes."

Kids were laughing at him, so Oscar dropped out. He just hung around the house eating tacos and watching TV, until one day he saw an ad for the Marines. It was full of young guys--thin, strong guys--driving tanks and flying helicopters and running big computers. So right then, he decided to enlist. He got into weights, and he took drugs to make himself bigger. Pretty soon Danny couldn't hardly recognize him no more.

Oscar had a funny shape. He looked like a door, flat and wide. The night we met, he wanted me to punch his stomach. He kept yelling, "Harder. *Harder!*" till pretty soon my

knuckles hurt too much. Danny said, "He's ready for war." But when a war finally came, all that he saw was four days of fighting. And that's why he got so pissed.

But a week later, someone called from the base. It was good news, I guess. Oscar looked real happy. He said he had to leave on a secret mission, and he might not come back. He said we might read about it in the papers, or maybe we would never know what happened. But if he ended up dead, Danny was to take all his stuff. "Anything you want," said Oscar. "Just take it."

The next morning he was gone. Then, for awhile we looked in the paper every day, but we never read about no secret mission, and pretty soon we stopped looking, there was so much going on at home.

The first thing going on was that me and Carla had sex. I didn't expect it to happen. One day we were sitting on her bed, and while she was talking to me she started touching my legs. I didn't say nothing, but then she pointed at my lap and said, "Hey, what's that?"

I got really hard and it was pushing up my pants like a big stake.

She said, "What are you going to do now?" She sounded scared, which was really strange because then she had to show me what to do. I couldn't even find where to put it, but all the while, she kept saying, "*Don't make me do this.*" And after I came, she told me I was really bad.

When I left her house, I didn't want to go back there no more. I was glad when she didn't show up at school. She stayed out for a week. Then one day she surprised me after class in the hall. She came up to me and told me she was pregnant.

"Did you see a doctor?" I said.

She said she didn't have to. She could tell.

I said, "It's only been a week."

Then she got really mad, like I called her a liar. She said now, thanks to me, she couldn't finish high school. She'd have to take care of a baby. And when her parents heard about it, they would throw her out, and she wouldn't have no place to go. She and the baby would be living on the street and I was to blame for everything.

I didn't know what to say, so I said I'd think of something. But everyone I went to for advice, they just said to forget about it. Carla was sleeping with Benny Mendoza, and everybody knew it.

"*Bull shit!*" Carla said. "If anybody's talking shit about me, let them say it to my face. Listen, all I ever did was, one time I smoked some weed with Benny at a party. Then we both crashed out. So in the morning everybody starts to get ideas."

What I heard about Benny Mendoza, he was in prison for a year. He got caught for selling drugs, but they let him out because he had a bad kidney, and they didn't want to pay to fix it. I didn't know him, but I used to see him around. He was a skinny guy with lazy eyes. Instead of a beard, he had a little tail of hair under the middle of his lip.

One night I went over to Danny's house to talk about my problem, but he got mad at me. He said Benny Mendoza had been saying stuff. "He's laughing at you, Chuy. He's a real piece of shit. Hey, don't you get it?" Danny said. "She don't want to tell her parents it's Benny's kid."

Well, I told him, maybe it was true. But I still felt sorry for Carla because now she wouldn't have no place to live, which isn't good for a baby. I said, "I got to help her." He said, "*You crazy, man?* It ain't your kid."

But I told him, "It's still a baby."

"*Hijole!*" he said. "He's laughing at you!"

I couldn't figure it out. *Why was Danny getting madder than me?* He kept shaking his fist and swearing all kinds of stuff he was going to do . . . But I got it wrong. See, he wasn't thinking about Benny, or Carla, or me. Danny was thinking about some other guy and Lenora. And this was my big, dumb mistake.

Finally, he couldn't take it no more, so got off the bed and went into the closet. When he came back he had a gun, Oscar's gun. He said Oscar left him this gun so he could look after things.

"Oh, no. You'll get in trouble," I said.

We had a big fight then. It lasted a long time. I wouldn't leave until he promised not to use the gun. But Danny wouldn't promise, and finally it got so late, I had to go home.

After that night, I didn't see too much of Danny. But this was his last year in school, and a lot of seniors were cutting classes. I asked his friends how he was doing, but nobody saw him much. Talk to Hector, they said. They meant Hector Lopez, the catcher on Danny's team. But it was always hard to get Hector Lopez to talk, and when I asked, he just kept shaking his head.

"You know what's wrong?" I said.

"Yeah," said Hector. Then he thought about it for a long time till finally he said, "He's going through a lot of changes."

I waited another week. Then I went to Danny's house. His mother said he was in his room, and she looked kind of worried. She walked me to his door and knocked. She said, "Danny? Open up. It's Chuy. He wants to talk to you."

After awhile, he let me in, but he didn't say a word till his mother left. Even then he didn't say too much, but finally he asked about Carla. He just said, "You still with that bitch?"

"I don't know," I said because I didn't want to make him mad.

"I got to do something," he told me. Then I saw the gun on the bed. When I looked back at Danny, he said, "Go home now, Chuy."

But I sat down and wouldn't move.

"I'm going to kill him," he said, and I still was thinking he meant Benny Mendoza.

Then we heard his mother coming down the hall. She knocked again, but the door was still open, so she stuck in her head. She said it was Lenora on the phone.

"*Shit*," was all Danny said.

"She's waiting," said his mother. "You want to talk to her?"

"Tell her-- *I'll* tell her," he said.

Then he rolled off the bed and left me in his room with the gun. I didn't know what was going on. What did it mean when your friend is going through changes? Why did he get so mad? Why did he want to kill a guy on account of me . . . These were all the things I wondered. And then I picked up the gun. It was big and heavy, but I stuck it under my belt, and then I pulled out my tee shirt to cover the handle.

I figured if Danny cared so much, it was my job to deal with Benny Mendoza.

It was still pretty hot outside, so nobody closed the front door. When I walked down the street, I could see into every house. I saw kids in the kitchens eating dinner, and old people on the porches, listening to the radio. And there were some young guys in a driveway working on an old car. They looked about Danny's age, but I never saw them at the school. I said, "I'm looking for Benny Mendoza," but they just stared at me like they couldn't believe it. Like why would I want to find Benny Mendoza? They said they never heard of him and went on watching me till I walked away.

I must have spent another hour talking to different guys, but it was always the same, like no one ever heard the name. Then the sun set, it got dark out quick, and soon the streetlights came on. I walked over to Rosario's Cantina, up to the big window in front, and looked at myself in the glass. It was strange because I almost didn't recognize my face--a long, skinny face without an expression and big black eyes that didn't blink. Then I started to wonder what I was doing here, alone on the street with a gun. I was pretty mixed up, and I kept thinking something different. Like, should I marry Carla or dump her? Shoot Benny or throw away the gun?

There was nobody I could ask. So right there, in front of Rosario's Cantina, I tried to talk to God. This was the first time in maybe ten years, and I didn't know if I still could hear His voice, but I shut my eyes and told him my story. And then I waited a long time.

I didn't hear nothing. But after awhile, something did happen. I didn't hear His voice, but I got an idea. And I figured maybe this idea came from Him. And then I felt so glad, all of a sudden I started running back to Danny's house to tell him.

I was breathing hard when I got to his room, and when he saw me, he looked scared because he knew I took the gun.

"*Did you-- ?*" he said.

I never saw such fear on Danny's face until I shook my head. It was okay, I told him. "I figured it out. We don't have to kill nobody," I said. Then I tried to explain. "Suppose Carla has a baby, and he grows up, and he asks about his father? Someone's going to tell him, 'Jesus Santos is in prison because he killed your father.' The kid would hate me, right?"

Danny didn't know what I was talking about, but I kept going.

I said, "We can't do it." And then I took out the gun, and I tried to give it back to him. At first he just stared down like he didn't want it either. But then he took it from me and just stared at it awhile. He didn't want to talk. He couldn't take his eyes off the gun, so I left him in his room and went back home.

The last week of classes, the seniors didn't show up much. They'd party at night, and in the morning, they'd drive by the school and wave and honk their horns, so I didn't expect to see much of Danny. Anyway, I had other stuff on my mind.

I had a big talk with my mother. I told her about Carla and the baby, and what I wanted to do. My mother wasn't mad or nothing. She just moved the hair from my eyes and shook her head and said I was a baby. Then she said I had to promise her I would wait till I was seventeen, and if I still felt the same way, she would give me permission.

When I told that to Carla, she shook her fist and shouted, "Yes!" Then she started talking real fast. She said now her parents wouldn't throw her out, and I was her Savior, and she was going to be The World's Best Wife and Mother. "You'll see, Chuy. I'm going to make you proud."

From that day on, she wanted to walk around every place, up and down the street holding my hand. She was a whole different person. She was happy all the time. Only my mother looked sad, and at night she cried in her room so I wouldn't hear, but I heard weeping through the wall.

Of course, I had to tell Danny the news. In a few months I was going to be a father, and pretty soon I'd be a husband too.

He wasn't mad or nothing. He even said, "I'm glad for you."

So then I told him he would be my best man.

"*Chale*," he said, which means, Yeah, right. I don't think so.

"What's wrong?" I said because then I noticed his eyes were wet and red.

For a long time he wouldn't say nothing. But then he looked at me and said, "There's a party tonight. You want to go?"

It was a graduation party, and I was a freshman, so yeah, I was proud he asked me. And then I was happy, too, because he said he was going to stay in Tucson. Maybe he'd go to Pima, the community college. They offered him a baseball scholarship.

I said, "That's great. I'll come see you play."

"*Chale*," he said, "bring your kid." Like it was all a joke, but he didn't smile. And he didn't seem to care.

That night, Danny drove us to the party in his father's car. There was no place to park for a couple of blocks, so we had to walk a long way toward the noise and lights. It was a typical party--lots of beer and tequila and smoking *mota*. But because it was a graduation party too, someone brought a case of pink champagne, and some guy was shaking a bottle. Then his thumbs pried out the plastic cork and WHAM! He started waving the bottle around like the end of a hose, spraying foam all over. It got in the hair of Rosa and Elena Higuera, two sisters, and they screamed and covered their faces. Everyone was there that night, even Benny Mendoza. When the bottle exploded, he jumped down on the floor like he was ducking a bullet. People were laughing at him, and then the Higuera sisters started laughing, too, and shaking out their wet hair. It was a great party, a lot of people having fun.

Next time I looked around, Danny disappeared someplace, so I found a place on the sofa next to Maria Mendoza. In the first grade we sat next to each other, but even then we didn't talk much. Maria is considered the most beautiful girl in our school. None of the guys would even bother her. She's so perfect, they must think, Wow! God had a hand in this, and they leave her alone. She said she was glad to see me here. "Are you still going out with Carla?" she said.

I told her yes, Carla was pregnant and we were going to get married next year when I was seventeen.

She said, "Oh." Then she got really sad because she just broke up with her boyfriend. She said she was happy for me, but she didn't look too happy.

"What's wrong?" I said.

"Oh, I don't want to tell you," she said. Then she looked like maybe she would but she wasn't sure. So I promised to keep her secret, and even then she took a big breath and sighed. It was all kind of sad, she said, because all these years she always liked me, ever since I sat next to her in school.

"We were little kids," I said, and we started to remember. Back then, my mother used to pack my lunch in a paper bag, and I kept it in my desk. I was always hungry, so when the teacher wasn't looking I'd sneak some food and stuff my mouth.

Maria started to laugh. She said, "Chuy, do you remember--"

"Oh, yeah," I said because I knew what she meant. One day the teacher started writing on the board. But then he swung around and looked straight at me. My mouth was full, my cheeks were blow up. "It was peanut butter," I said. "I couldn't even swallow."

Maria started to laugh, and Maria's laughter is a sound as beautiful as her face. Then she stopped. "Ever since that day," she said, "I had a big crush on you, Chuy."

"*Chale*," I said. "You could get any guy in the school."

"Oh, no," she said. "I couldn't get the one I wanted."

I wondered who she was taking about. Who was the fool that couldn't love Maria Mendoza. I started looking around the room when all of a sudden she took my hand and she put it beside her. Even then, I didn't think too much about it. But finally, when I didn't do nothing but sit there, she pressed against my side and put her head down on my shoulder. I thought, *Hijole!* What's this? I'm not drunk. I'm not high. So I must be dreaming. But I felt the tickle of her hair on my cheek, and I could smell flowers from the shampoo in Maria's hair. I took that smell into my lungs, and it made me big with love, so much love that it spread out to everybody in the room. And even then it kept on going, through the walls and windows, a big warm river of my love moving down the sleepy streets.

After awhile a girl came into the room with three candles on a plate. Somebody turned off the lights as she set a couple on the floor and the third one on a window ledge. I guess she couldn't find any regular candles because these were the *veladoravs* my mother buys for the Virgin. Now the room felt to me like an old church lighted by fire. All the kids were pretty stoned, and some couples got down on the floor. I watched their shadows humping on the walls while the candles flickered.

By then Maria put my arm around her, but when she shut her eyes she looked asleep. I wanted to sleep next to her and become part of the dream that she was having. So I shut my eyes, but I stayed awake, listening to the sounds of noisy sex. I didn't mind these sounds. I could recognize the music in each girl's breath. Like at school when the teacher played the tape of an orchestra, and then she asked us to listen just to the

trumpets or the cellos or the flutes. That's how I came to know each girl in the room. There was one who breathed in short sips--whew whew whew--and another who groaned like a ghost. There was a girl who sang like the bird in my backyard, the same quick note over and over . . . To me, this was like being in Heaven with Maria Mendoza, listening to the loving sounds of angels as the *veladoras* warmed the walls with their beautiful light.

But then, just for a second, the breathing sounds all stopped when a big noise went off. A big *POP!* It came from another room, like maybe someone opened some more champagne. Soon nobody even cared, except for me. The noise shook me up, and I had all these bad thoughts. I remembered about Carla and my promise. If I didn't marry her now, her parents would throw her out. But if I married her, what was the use of meeting Maria here tonight?

Maria could feel me pulling away, so then she sat up. "Chuy?" she said.

I said, "I got to find Danny." As I was getting up, she held onto my sleeve, but I said, "I got to go now. I'll see you around."

Then I stood up in the darkness, surrounded by humping shadows, and I found my way into the hall. There were two bedrooms at the back of the house, but only one leaked some light at the bottom of the door. That was the one I opened. There was no one inside. The bed was still made, and the light came from a lamp on the desk, where someone wrote a note. I went over for a look, and there I saw Danny lying down on the floor. Half his face was in the shadow of the bed, but the other half was bright from the lamp and staring at the ceiling.

"*Que tonto?*" I said, but he didn't answer. "What are you writing?"

I don't know why it took so long for me to understand that Danny Romero was dead. For the longest time I stood over him, looking down and thinking he was pulling a joke. Then time jumped ahead. I went from standing over him to kneeling on the floor. First I covered up the bloody side of his face, and then picked up the gun. It was Oscar's gun, and I remembered how Danny didn't want to take it from me. And I was sorry, so sorry I handed him this gun. I said out loud, "God? *You* let this happen?" Because it is the worst thing anyone could go through to look down, and see his best friend's blood on his hand. But this is what happened to me. On the night I met Maria again and fell in love, I saw this terrible sight.

Anyway, next thing I knew, people were standing at the door. And they were saying, "*What going on?*" and "*Who got shot?*" There was a lot of noisy talk, and some girl started to scream. She kept saying, "Oh my God oh my God!" over and over. Pretty soon, a policeman arrived. He made them all go into the other room. Then he came back to deal with me. He looked pretty young to be a policeman, like nineteen or twenty. He stood with his legs apart, and he held his arms in a Vee and pointed his revolver at

my face. Then he shouted, "*Drop the gun!*" like this was some kind of a big military operation.

I dropped the gun, and I did all the things he told me. I kicked it over to him, and then I got up from the floor, and he made me lift up my shirt and turn around, so he could see my stomach and my back--that there were no other weapons--and then he shouted, "*Raise your hands!*" So I did. And I had to walk toward him backward. When I got within an arm's reach, he put his palm on my head and pushed me down to the floor. "*Put your hands behind you!*" he shouted. And he handcuffed my wrists.

Only then, while he was patting down my whole body, did he stop shouting. Then he tried to tell me a lot of bullshit, that he was only doing this for my safety, that I should relax. Yeah, sure! Up close, he looked even younger, maybe even Danny's age. He was still real excited, breathing hard and talking loud, like he was in great danger.

Then the strangest thing happened. No one will believe me, but the policeman was there, and he and I know it's true. It happened this way. The policeman told me not to move. Then he went over to Danny's body to make sure he was dead. He bent down beside Danny and lifted his wrist. And the next thing--honest to God—Danny started sitting up! I swear it's true. Danny rose from the floor with a great big breath, and he flung out his arms.

It was a big shock, believe me. The policeman jerked back and started yelling, "*Ahhh!*" He fell right on his ass, and then he grabbed his gun and started pointing it at Danny, like a zombie or something was coming after him. For me, it was different. I was shocked, too, but I was happy. I wanted to laugh. I thought God heard my prayer, and He raised the dead. There was Danny, sitting up, and he had to be alive. His eyes were big and open. They must have snapped one last picture of this world before his lungs gave back his breath, and he dropped dead on the floor.

"*Holy Shit!*" said the policeman. "A dying breath," he called it. Then he said, "Scared the shit of me. *Damn!* I never saw one before." I think he tell me this because he was embarrassed, and he didn't want me to tell nobody. That's all he cared about, what the other cops thought. But I didn't care what they thought. I only cared that Death could play such a mean trick--that after taking a life, Death had to mock the living.

After he caught his breath, the policeman took me by the arm. He said, "It's time to go," and he led me through the house. By then, some more policemen had arrived. They must have been detectives because they didn't wear uniforms. Instead they wore jeans and nylon jackets that said Tucson Police Department across the back. They'd sent everyone to the living room and told them to sit apart. Then they started talking to each kid and writing down stuff in their little books. I didn't see Maria Mendoza, but as the policeman took me through the crowd, all the others stopped to stare. It was the first time in my life people looked at me as if I was important.

After you get arrested, it's not just a simple thing where they take you to the station and put you in jail. First they got to tell you your rights--the right to be silent and all that stuff. Then they ask you questions and write everything down.

Later on, a guy came around with a camera. He took some pictures of my face and the palm of my hand with all the blood. Then he got a Q-tip, and wet it in some alcohol, and wiped some blood off my palm. After that, he looked me over really good. He checked between my fingers, and he looked up and down my arms on both sides. This guy had cold hands and touched me like he was working on a corpse.

Finally, I wound up in an empty room with a table and some chairs. They sat me so I had to face a mirror, but it was a fake, so they could see me from the other side. Then they left me alone, but I figured maybe someone in the hall was watching me. They left me there for a long time. It was so long, I thought they forgot about me, and I'd have to sit at that table until the morning. According to the clock on the wall, it was three a.m. I watched the second hand go around. I rubbed some blood off my palm. Finally a new guy came into the room. He must have been a policeman, too, but he wore a running suit and a baseball cap, and his face was pale and sleepy like he just got up. He had a long straight nose and short red hair. He said his name was Sergeant Wolenik, but he told me to call him Bob, just plain Bob.

"How's everyone been treating you?" he said.

I told him okay so far.

"Well, they better," he said. "You don't have to talk to anyone. Did the officer tell you that?"

He was a pretty strange policeman who talked like he didn't trust cops. He even told me my rights again, in case the others left something out. Then he explained to me about juvenile court. He said if this court didn't take my case, I could be tried as an adult.

"Am I going to jail?" I said.

"You're not under arrest," he said. "They should have told you that." Then he asked if I wanted a soda or something. He said he needed one, too, so he left me to get them. While he was gone, I figured I was pretty lucky to have Bob here instead of somebody mean. He came back right away with two cans of Pepsi. Then he was sorry there were no more Cokes. I said, no big deal, I drink them both. But Bob said he started out liking Pepsi only now he liked Coke better. Then he didn't say any more. He just drank his soda slowly like now it was my turn.

So I said, "Bob, did you ever hear people say that everything happens for a reason? My mother says it all the time."

"You mean bad things?" he said. "Like what happened to your friend?" He nodded. He said, "I hear it all the time."

"So what do you think?" I said. "What's the reason?"

Bob didn't answer. He took another long drink before he put down the can. Then he said, "I had to call your mother and tell her where you are."

"*My mother?*" I said. "What did she say?"

"She's scared for you, son. She wants to come down and get you."

"Can she do that?"

"I sent a car," he said, "to pick her up."

I was really glad because my mother doesn't know how to drive, and it would cost a lot to pay a taxi. I told him thanks, thanks a lot.

He said, "She's pretty shaken up. She says the other kid--Danny--was your best friend."

"Oh yeah," I said. "We go way back."

"That's what everybody tells me. You and Danny were like brothers." He finished the soda. Then he said, "Was it your gun?"

"No way," I said.

"Then how did you get it?"

"I took it," I said. "You know, when Danny wasn't looking." Then I realized I just made a big mistake.

"You took it," he said. "When was that?" This time I didn't answer him. "What did you want the gun for?" he said. Then he checked his watch. "Well," he said, "it's up to you. I just thought you'd rather tell me because the other cops will want to know."

"I can tell you instead?"

"That's my point," said Bob. "But only if you want to. Or you can wait for your mother. She may want you to talk to a lawyer."

"*A lawyer?*" I said. What did my mother know about lawyers? She'd just be scared, I thought. "If I tell you," I said, "can I go home?"

That would depend, he said. "You have to tell the truth. Why did you take the gun."

I figured it was okay to say it, since I didn't really do it. So I said, "I was going to shoot Benny Mendoza."

"Kill him?" he said.

"Yeah, sure," I said. "But I didn't do it. I gave the gun back to Danny."

Bob took out his notebook. He went back several pages. "Wasn't Benny Mendoza at the party? You didn't mention that."

I said, "I must have forgot."

"Son," he said. "You couldn't just forget. You were going to shoot this guy."

I said, "Yeah, but I changed my mind."

"What about Danny?" Bob said. "Did he want to shoot him? *The truth.*"

"Oh, well." I shrugged. "Maybe just a little."

"Did you *want* Danny to shoot him?"

"*No way,*" I said.

Then Bob's voice got slow and heavy. He said, "Listen to me, son. *Did you try to stop Danny? Did you struggle with the gun?* " Before I could answer, he changed his mind. He raised his hand so I wouldn't speak. Then he stood up and left the room. He wasn't gone too long before he came back with a tape recorder. "Let's do this right," he said. "So we won't have to keep going over it."

We had to start all over. He even asked me my name and stuff like that. I wondered about the time, but Bob said, "You're doing fine, son. Shall we keep going a little longer?" He was such good guy, I didn't complain even once. Bob didn't push me or nothing. It was like to talking to a friend all night. So we talked and talked, until this other policeman came into the room. He was fat and kind of old. His hair was white, and he walked with a limp. He went over to Bob and whispered in his ear. It must have been important because Bob looked at me, the old guy whispered some more, and Bob stopped the tape recorder. Then he pinched his nose and rubbed his eyes, as the old guy limped out of the room.

Something was going on because all of a sudden, Bob wasn't Bob anymore. His face got so full of blood his freckles didn't show.

I said, "What's wrong, Bob? Can I help?"

But he just shook his head some more. Then he sighed, and it was such a long sigh, it lasted till all the blood faded out of his face. When he looked at me, he was pale again and tired and kind of old. He said, "You asked me if everything happens for a reason."

I sat up straight because this was something I needed to understand.

"You want to know the reason?" Bob said. Then he shut his eyes. When he opened them, he said, "You poor simple mutt," as he got up from the table to leave.

But I grabbed his wrist and stared up at him. "Tell me," I said.

He stared at my hand until I let go. Then he said, "You want to know the reason? You want to know why shit happens all the time."

"*Is it God?*" I said.

"It's people," he said. "*Stupid people* who keep on fucking up." Then he left me in the room and shut the door, and I never saw Bob again.

More time passed, maybe half an hour. It was very lonely then, but after awhile I didn't even care. That's how I finally felt at the end of this terrible night, that I didn't even care. The next time the door opened, it was the old policeman with a limp.

I said, "Where's Bob?"

"Bob doesn't want to talk to you anymore. Come on. Let's go," he said. He pulled on my arm till I stood up, and then he rushed me to the door. He led me straight to a waiting room at the front of the station. My mother was there. She had been there for hours. She was so glad when she saw me, her bottom lip started shaking. So were her fingers, so I held them. They were very cold.

"Is it true, Jesus?" she said. My mother always called me Chuy, but on this night I was Jesus. "Where would you get a gun?" she asked.

I said I was sorry, *Ama*. I said, "It's my fault."

Then my mother's legs began to fail. I had to hold her up while the old policeman came over to help. He kept shaking his head at me, but when he looked at my mother, he wasn't mad anymore. He said, "It's all right, Mrs. Santos. Your boy didn't do it."

My poor mother, she still didn't understand.

He said, "You can leave now. Your son's just been telling us a story."

"Chuy? Why would he do that?"

"God knows. It makes them feel better. You feel better now, son?"

But I told him, "No, sir." Confession was supposed to help my soul, but now I felt worse than ever.

It was really sad on the day of Danny's funeral. Even the sky looked in mourning for him, dark and sad. There were storm clouds over the mountains, still a lot of people came--I guess the whole senior class, and Danny's teachers, the others players on the baseball team, and Danny's coach. My mother came, too, and at least a hundred of Danny's relatives drove here from Yuma and Phoenix and all over the state. Some of them even came from Mexico.

Danny's mother asked me to stand beside her, next to Oscar. He wore his Marine dress uniform, and he stood at attention the whole time until the priest finished reading. Then Lenora stepped out of the crowd. She walked up to Danny's mother, and they kissed. She came over to me and kissed my cheek. Next she went up to Oscar. He bent down to whisper something special in her ear . . . Then something happened. Lenora started backing up, away from Oscar. After a few steps she stopped, all the time staring at Oscar's eyes like she was begging him for something, but his face was stone, so she swung around suddenly and started pushing through the crowd. It was a big crowd. Pretty soon I couldn't see her no more, and we all walked back to our cars.

Later on at Danny's house, Oscar explained. He told me all about why Danny shot himself. It was because of Lenora. She had a boyfriend back in Texas. A few months ago, this boyfriend moved here to be close to her. He took a job in town, and Lenora started seeing him again, but she was seeing Danny too. She told Danny that she loved them both. He didn't know how to handle it.

"I told Danny," Oscar said, "deal with the guy or get rid of the bitch. I put the gun in his hand. It's all my fault," he said.

But I took the gun away, and then I gave it back to Danny. So who was really to blame? And if Danny had to die, what was the reason?

A couple of weeks passed, and my mother kept asking if I was all right. I didn't know what to tell her, and she didn't know what to do. Then one day she decided to call her sister in California. She talked about me like I wasn't even there, and after she hung up, she told me she'd decided. It was time for me to meet my Tía Teresa.

Up to then, I only knew about my tía from the stories I heard, and a picture of her in an album. She is a short lady with a beautiful face, like a fat angel. She's psychic, too. Everybody in the family says so, but if people don't know her, they think she's a witch.

To give an example, she was the first to know my grandpa died. She called my mother from California, and said to make the funeral arrangements. My mother got excited. She

said, "What are you talking about? *Ápa, esta bien*. He's in the other room." Then she went into the den to take a look, but grandpa was already dead in his big chair with a newspaper lying on his lap. Another time she called my mother and said to see the doctor right away. My mother said, "How come you want me to see a doctor?" But she figured she better go and be safe, so she went to the doctor and then she found out she had walking pneumonia.

Well, anyway, a week later, we took a bus to see my tía in California. My cousin met us at the Greyhound Station and drove us to my tía's house. When she heard the car, she came up the front door. I was carrying a couple of valises, but she stopped me, so I put them down. She stared up at my face for a long time. Then she held my face inside her hands, and she stared up into my eyes. When my mother was near, she said, "Cecilia, you are blessed. You are doubly blessed." She didn't ever want to let go of my face. Later on my mother explained that she's a little crazy but she's really good.

This was my first trip away from Tucson. I always heard that California isn't nice anymore because of all the gangs. And my tía lives on a street with a gang, but she told us not to worry, the gang protects the barrio. We could walk anywhere we want and be safe, except don't go north, she said. Every place else was okay.

Anyway, I didn't care about going out for a walk. There was a room just for me, and that's where I stayed most of the time. All day, my mother and my tía talked about me in the kitchen, so I closed the door and hung out in bed. I had such terrible thoughts. All my life, God had been there for me. But now, I didn't think He was anywhere. It seemed to me if I saw Danny try to shoot himself, I would stop him. And if I would do that, why wouldn't God--who's supposed to be so perfect, and see everything that happens, and love every single person?

I never had such thoughts or such a heavy, achy feeling in my chest. It must have been from loneliness.

Then one night I couldn't sleep at all. One, two, three in the morning. Finally I got out of bed. I was dressed already and tired of lying on my back, so I got up and went outside on the front porch. There was nothing going on. All the houses were dark and quiet. I started walking up the street. I didn't even know which way I was going. I must have walked for maybe like an hour, and then I wondered if I was heading north, where my tía told me not to go. Which way was north? I didn't know that either.

I came to a place where the streetlights didn't work and people lived in darkness. The houses looked older here, and a lot of them had mean dogs. They came barking up to the fence and showed me their teeth, Dobermans and a couple of pit bulls, acting like they wanted to tear me apart. They made a bunch of noise, but nobody turned on a house light, so I guess they were used to it.

I walked so far that finally there was no more houses, just an empty street which led to a highway. That's where I stopped, like a hitchhiker, next to the highway entrance. My watch said four o'clock in the morning, and it didn't seem possible that I could ever find my way back. So I sat down on the curb, and I decided just to wait there until I could figure something out. This was very quiet night, and I was surprised I could be alone for so long in Southern California and not even see a car or another person. It was pretty miserable to wind up a place like that. The sky was black without a single star. I figured, Oh well, I'll try one more time. I'll talk to God. So I said out loud, "God, if You are really up there, come down here and show Yourself. You wouldn't leave me here if You were still my friend."

I waited a long time, a whole hour, and He didn't show up. Finally, I got so tired that I crossed my arms over my knees and lowered my head. I think maybe I feel asleep. A car woke me up. At first it sounded far away, but it come closer really fast. It came roaring toward me like maybe the muffler had a big hole. Soon it sounded so loud, I had to cover my ears. This car was dirty white, an old Chevy with one headlight. It was one of those antique cars from the Fifties at least, with a couple of tail fins. It even moved like a fish, like a whale bouncing over the waves. I guess it didn't have no shocks. It seemed to be heading for the highway, but when it got close to the entrance, the car slowed down. It drove straight up to me and stopped. The front end was shaking, and the tailpipe was coughing black smoke.

Then, whoever was driving cut the engine, and the one headlight went out and everything got more silent than before. At first, it just stood there, parked like a ghost car without a rider. But finally the driver's door started creaking open. It was so banged up, the driver had to push it with his shoulder. Then this guy climbed out-- kind of a short guy, but a muscle man. Through his tee-shirt, I could see the lumps of muscle in his stomach and chest. He wore a dark bandana and an earring in one ear. And his eyes were half-closed and looked at me funny. Like maybe he was on drugs or something. Walking up to me, he stumbled on a broken heel.

I thought, Oh great. Now I'm going to get rolled.

When he got to the curb, he stopped and looked at me over. "What's wrong with you?" he said.

"Nothing," I said. I just wanted him to leave.

"You sad or something?" he said. Then, before I could answer, he said, "I came to tell you. *God is real, man. It's true.* "

I didn't believe what I was hearing.

Then he said it again. And he told me I was very special and God had a plan just for me.

"Did God send you here?" I said.

"That's right," he said. "He sent me to tell you."

I figured there was no way this guy could know about my prayer, so I asked, "Are you an angel?"

That set him off. He laughed so hard, his voice broke, and then he started coughing, like a deep, long smoker's cough, for maybe a whole minute. Finally it died down. And then he got real serious, and he said, "How did *you* know I'm an angel?"

So I told him. I said, "I asked God to come here and talk to me."

"No shit?" he said. "That was *you*?" And he wiped his nose on the back of his hand. "Well, He couldn't make it," the angel said, "so He sent me. He told me to tell you, *He loves you, man. You got to believe me.*"

"Okay," I said because I thought it must be true.

Then he bent down to get closer, and he stared at me with his sleepy eyes and his brown leather face. "You made me very happy," he said. "This job's a bitch. I go around this city, most people won't even talk to me. You're the first." Then he shrugged like to say, What can you do? And he walked back to the Chevy and climbed inside. He put the car in reverse and pulled away backwards. He drove so fast, he left a chunk of tire on the street. Then he swung the car around in a circle, screeching like a chicken, and shot down the street so fast that POOF! He just disappeared.

When the sun came out, I raised my head off my arms, so I must have been sleeping. But then I saw the tread from the angel's car, still printed on the street, and that proved he wasn't just a dream.

By now there were cars up and down the highway, flying by. It was time to go, so I started down the long empty street until I came to a Texaco station. It was pretty big and took up a whole corner. There must have been at least a dozen pumps, and a big garage, and some toilets in a store that sold everything. But there were locks on the doors of the display case, and a big wire cage over the outside windows, which didn't say too much for the neighborhood.

I wanted to ask the counter guy for directions, but I didn't know my *tía's* address. I didn't even know her last name. So all I could do was pee in the Men's Room and take a drink of water. By then, the day got very beautiful. Through the cage wire on the window, I could see a blue ocean of sky, and clouds like beaches of pink and white sand.

After I left the station, I seemed to know the way, and soon I came to a neighborhood that reminded me of someplace. It had palm trees and fenced-in yards and stucco

houses. Across the street I saw a big palo verde, my favorite tree because it reminds me of one in the Bible, the Tree of Life. It doesn't have leaves, and it looks kind of dead except that it is the color of fresh young grass.

While I was looking at this tree, I heard dogs and chickens. Then a cock crowed, and I felt like I was back in Tucson. Even the names on the mailboxes were the names of my neighbors, Chavez, Hernandez, and Romero. But when I looked across the street again, there was my tía's house, and she was sitting on her front porch, waiting for me. So I crossed the street and climbed the porch stairs.

She asked me to sit with her awhile. My mother was still sleeping. "You had a good walk, *mi jito*. You're better now," she said because she knew something happened. She said when I first came to her house, all she saw around me was darkness, but today when I stood across the street, she saw me in a golden light. "Tell me," she said. "Tell me everything that happened."

She meant from the very beginning, so we sat on the porch, and I told her about Oscar and Carla and Benny Mendoza. I explained about Danny and Leonora, how he shot himself in the head and how police took me away like it was my fault. And then told her what happened last night. How I asked Him to come down and see me, but He sent an angel instead.

This made my tía excited. She wanted to know the smallest things about the angel, even the color of his eyes, which I didn't see because it was too dark. She didn't even think it was strange that he drove a Chevy. She just listened to it all, and then she said I must feel happy to be so special to God.

"What's wrong?" she said.

"He didn't come," I said. "I still don't know why He let Danny die. *Do you know, tía?*"

"No," she said. "I don't know that either.

I turned away from her toward the street.

"But if you want the answer," she said. "I can tell you what you have to do."

She led me into the house. Then she found a notebook, like the ones I use in school, and a pen, which she must have got from her dentist's office. Along the side of the pen, it said, ENJOY A PLEASANT DENTAL EXPERIENCE. She gave me the pad and the pen, and she told me to go to my room. "I want you to write *everything*," she said. "From the first thing you can remember."

And that's what I've been doing here all day, writing down the story of my life, up until six o'clock this morning. My tía said that when I finish, I should read it over, so that's what I'm going to do next. Then she said to put the notebook away. And in five more years, I

have to read it again. And then she told me to add all the new stuff that happened. She says to keep doing this every five years, and in time, it will start to make a little sense. By the end of my life, she said I will find the answer that I want in the story that I am writing.

I will read it back, she promised, and then I will understand why everything had to happen in such a way. Why I had to meet Carla first, and promise to marry her, before Maria and I fell in love. And why God, though He loves us all, watched Danny Romero put a bullet in his head.

Virgin Sturgeon
Vivian Hansen

In the time of Old Man who was then lean and tall as a lodgepole pine -- 1953 perhaps - the Black Flies hatched along the South Saskatchewan River. They emerged from the river's lullaby, took on ferocity as they approached cattle, biting, drawing blood, killing. While they slept in the river's cocoon, we ate their pupae and larvae, river berries as sweet and succulent as Old Man's saskatoons.

We came to know of the poison through our gill slits -- the resonance of voice lying at the base of our useless tongues. They were channels to the common vision of wet, an eye in the ancient superorder of fishes Chondrostei. We were the king of all fish, the last that scouted the veins of the glaciers. Finding the sharp scent of the mud banks in the river, we dived and stayed.

The Black Flies harassed men and the creatures they owned. We fish of the Old Order have no such offense. We are bottom-feeders, elusive, yielding our eggs in the oldest profession of sacrifice. Old Man heard our story after the DDT spilled, listened to the slow passion of our death as we spit into mud trying to get back to the vein of the glaciers-above-the-river.

The rubber hoses were calibrated for DDT, filled with kerosene for three weeks before the Day of Poisoning, eroding the firmament of round sand. The slim snakes held the poison aimed for Black Flies. *The surly snakes overdosed downstream of the 25th Street Bridge, said Old Man, we found whitefish, trout, jackfish, pickerel, sturgeon.*

Here's three cheers for the Virgin Sturgeon Virgin Sturgeon is a fish

Old Man sings, crooning memory that is cleft between rum and Saskatchewan riversun. Superorder Chondrostei, almost reclaiming legs, bewhiskered knowledge trying to escape the artery of an old glacier after the injection of DDT, the puncture of poison into the small downstream vein of a river.

*Virgin Sturgeon needs no urgin'
That's why caviar is my dish.*

Old Man sings this ceremonial song to remember the overdose that the scientists gave the river. He sings it, amazes himself with our presence, our twenty-foot length, our docility of no teeth.

There are so few of us left who float the dialect of gill, this third eye that saw the silt shift to kill the fly larvae. We drifted into a mud bath of DDT, the sharp scent of God gone.

Did I ever tell you what happened to the sturgeon along the Saskatchewan River when the DDT got into the river?

Old Man tells the story when he sings his ceremonial sturgeon song.

Non-Fiction

Contracting Iris **Mandy Catron**

Iris is glossy black. Belying her name, there is no hint of rainbow on her bronze belly, even in reflection. Golden wings have been lopped from her scapulae; no head sits on her shoulders, and an arm has been removed. Iris is all belly and breast, thigh and fold, with legs splayed shamelessly. She is declaratively woman, audaciously female.

And I want to be her.

I first saw her in Paris. My friend Joel and I were the epitome of American students abroad: young and over prepared and trying so desperately--despite our penchant for flipflops and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches--not to seem too American. I spent days in an overstimulated daze, gluttonously devouring art and Nutella crepes. I thought, "Life should be full of beautiful, delicious things."

I remember walking back to the hostel the first night, down Boulevard de Clichy. Joel kept a steady pace, turning his chest protectively toward my shoulder when waves of bodies washed past. I drifted along with a desire to inhale the photos of naked women, thighs spread, and the bouncers forcing eye contact, courting me in English: "Ladies go in free tonight." I remember neon branding the wet sky, the bodiless men whose eyes snatched at mine, Joel grabbing at my forearm as if his damp palm against my skin might equal protection. I was offended and enchanted and sure that I was at the center of life on a precipice.

Standing in the Musee Rodin, Rodin's one-time home, were bodies in various delightful contortions and dimensions. There were sculptures I knew like *Le Penseur* and *Le Baiser*, but more that I'd never seen. Those still, stone bodies seemed to want something very badly.

Iris fell somewhere in the succession of the falling and writhing and impossibly intertwining bodies. "Iris Messenger of the Gods," her placard read. She was bronze black, with a compact body slightly smaller than my own. With no head and no right arm to impede her movement, Iris balanced on a pedestal--her legs spread wide, her crotch at eye level. Her left arm and leg stretched together into the open air like a single limb, like a dancer in mid-leap, moments from a gesture of kinetic perfection. Her right leg bent below her, as if to spring her toward the ceiling. And in an impossible feat of grace, she balanced perfectly on the tips of her toes. There was a roughness to the sculpture, unfinished areas that suggested not voluptuous smoothness, but aggressive vitality. One nipple was distinct, while the other blurred into the hand-molded curve of her breast. It was as if Rodin had begun a sculpture of painstaking detail, but before

completion she'd taken matters into her own hands and contorted herself into a final form of impossibility.

I remember staring quietly, as if my gaze could ingest that unfinished form. I could stretch an arm and a leg, balance on only a toe and become a figure worthy of sculpture--or become sculpture. I would forsake my head to inhabit that blackness.

I spent the next three years without Iris. I finished school, moved to Florida, and moved again to Washington, D.C. I rode the Metro everywhere, thrilled by a new life in a new city. I found myself staring hungrily at everyone around me. I took notes: *A man with knob knees sits across from me. The hairs on his head are wisps of smoke; his skin is withered, hanging from his bones like wet gauze. A woman stands in the isle. Inked on the plump dark flesh just below her earlobe are the words RIP Greg. An Asian woman with a floppy belly and orange, crimped hair is whispering to her cornrow-ed boyfriend. Both are wearing overalls.*

I sat cross-legged in my orange vinyl seat, headphones in, journal open, staring shamelessly.

I was 23 when I became a voyeur--not voyeur in the I-watched-my-neighbors undress sense of the word, but more in the everything-is-oddly-arresting-and fascinating-so-I-stare-shamelessly sense. And nothing was exempt from my staring. I thought I was looking for something beautiful. I thought I could find it in the wilt of the rain-flooded daffodils outside of my house, or the people I passed on the sidewalks.

My mother taught me that it was impolite to stare, but upon questioning such conventional wisdom, I found no reason in it. I rationalized that I would not mind were someone to examine me similarly. I convinced myself that I would meet that gaze with my own. I found a deep pleasure in the act of looking, in the thrill that came with the risk of eye contact. Staring was my addiction, and perhaps if I'd stopped long enough to consider it, I'd realize it was Iris I was seeking.

One night, I found myself on a concrete bench, waiting for the next train. I'd been writing in my journal and missed my stop. It was late, but the platform was well lit and the air thick with the residue of September. The next train was fifteen minutes away--it'd be an hour before I was home. There, I had friends and a bottle of wine, but not the solitude of a fluorescent light in a black night. I inspected my reflection in the Plexiglas of the phone booth in front of me.

In my high school Biology class, I was taught, like every publicly educated child, that the eye works like a camera. Though I recognize the effective comparison, I hate how that metaphor robs the organ of the beauty of its own language. Though I could not feel it, as I survey the vacant platform, I imagined my iris contracting, permitting just the right amount of light to enter my pupil. The image in front of me--my pale hair and pink

cheeks--was being focused by my lens and cornea, then inverted and projected onto my retina. Layers upon layers of photoreceptive cells miraculously convert the likeness of my narrow blue eyes into an electric signal that my brain understands. But more specifically, it is the fovea, the tiny dent in the center of the retina, that hosts this upside down image.

In the average retina, there are some 120 million rods, their population dwarfing a measly seven million cones. But in the fovea, everything, even the dense web of blood vessels, is redirected so the cones have free reign to absorb and process color, shape, and line. The rest of the retina processes all that is peripheral, night vision, and motion detection, but it is the fovea that does the real work of seeing. And my foveae are weak, easily lured into submission by a Kandinsky red, or the paper curve cut of Matisse's knife.

Justin and I slept in a bed that stretched out below my naked window. Across the narrow alley was a house with two windows in view of my own. Both windows framed air conditioning units and ceramic animal sculptures, so I could not see in. Access to the goings on of my bedroom, however, was unrestrained. In the mornings, standing by my dresser, I felt framed by my wide window. In the evenings, with my lamp on, I was ever aware of existing inside a movie screen.

"Why do you care what the owners of a stone menagerie think of you?" Justin asked as we walked past one day, observing cherubs and sheep and other cement creatures, most of whom were cracked and overgrown with vines.

'Good point," I laughed, as if this voided any judgments they could place on me. But I couldn't help wondering how I would react were my neighbors to step out of the front door in that moment, if I were forced to confront them outside of the safety of my room.

My roommate's mother, a talented seamstress, offered to make us all curtains. I promised Erin I would call her mom with dimensions of my windows. But I never managed to find time. It seemed like a lot of work to measure the frame, have curtains made and sent, buy rods and rings and wall mounts. Surely after two months in my new home, the neighbors had already seen me sleep and dress and check my e-mail and sink my teeth into my boyfriend's shoulder. Ultimately, curtains were frivolous, weren't they?

I was wandering through the Hirshhorn Museum of contemporary art when I ran into her again. I turned the corner and there she sat, the only sculpture in the room, as if she had been there waiting for me, as if she'd always been there, though I knew she had not. I went to the Hirshhorn often, whenever I wanted to draw or walk silently, or ride my bike somewhere and simply look at something.

At first, when I saw her, I wasn't sure what to do. She was the same, still graceful, still lovely. I felt at once intimately connected and uncomfortably distant. I walked into the

other room, where Justin and I had spent hours sitting on the black leather couches. I sat down and looked out the window at the patches of dismal gray grass on the National Mall. I felt compelled to tell someone I'd found her, but who would I tell? I went back to her. I stood back several feet and stared at her, ingesting each part of her incomplete form individually: sloping shoulders; domed breasts; one arm; two feet; dimpled abdomen; open thighs.

People walked in front of and behind me, wandered around the room, and I felt that I should stop looking, that my gaze might appear too strong. But I did not. I walked up closer, examined her oversized toes, look at her back, which faced the wall. It seemed that I should not look at anyone like this, not in public, not so closely and for so long, not someone so blatantly scandalous. But I stayed and fed the voracious appetite of my foveae.

After I found her, I wanted to know all about her. Her first appearance is in *The Iliad*. Iris is uniquely skilled as a messenger because of her ability to imitate the form of mortals. Homer quotes Zeus imparting a message to Iris, after which he often explains that Iris "harkened and obeyed." She is loyal and compliant, to Zeus above all others. As only a messenger, she is not allowed to comfort those upon whom she bestows bad news. After the burning of Troy, her services are inexplicably abandoned for those of Hermes in *The Odyssey*.

Like Homer, Auguste Rodin had in mind a very specific occupation for his Iris. By imparting Iris with an imposing sexuality, Rodin rethought the responsibility of the messenger. She was to sit above a sculpture of his friend Victor Hugo in a national monument to Hugo, commissioned by the French government. There she would serve as his muse, a liaison between Hugo and the divine, a link between sexuality and creativity. In her first conception, Iris had a head and wings, and was to rest on a cloud as divine messenger. But before the monument was completed and installed, interest and financial support waned. However, Rodin salvaged Iris, reducing her to what he believed were her essential parts. She abandoned the role of voiceless observer and was reborn as the muse, the exhibit itself. Though she never realized her intended potential, she existed as an emblem of obscenity for the next fifty years, her sexuality more potent than even her creator imagined.

"Let me look at you," he said. The lights were out in my room, but lamplight from the alley flooded into my window. I'd been kneeling on the bed, reaching over to adjust the window screen. I froze in that position for a moment before balancing myself on the bed. I stayed still, knees bent below me, suddenly aware of wearing only panties and a bra--my stomach, thighs, chest, hips, all showing.

"Turn a little," he said, nudging my hips. I turned, unsure where to look, unable to make eye contact, grateful for the low light. No one had ever just asked to look at me. At first, my body seemed entirely separate from me, as if it was this thing I hauled around, like a backpack, and then I thought of how I'd always wanted someone to look at me, to just look and not speak and not judge, or to judge just a little, but favorably. More than that,

what I'd really wanted, always wanted for as long as I could remember, was for someone to find me beautiful--not pretty or interesting or gorgeous even--but completely aesthetic. Beautiful.

This is how, for a moment, I became Iris. For a moment, I loved being looked at, but I could not sustain it. I couldn't have imagined the horror and delight of looking at someone and seeing, without him saying, that he liked looking at me, that he could continue looking, indefinitely. "You're embarrassed," he teased. I said nothing in response. Though I could feel red blotches blooming across my chest. He grabbed me, and I laughed loudly and got under the duvet.

We are not allowed to like the way we look. We are encouraged to be confident, comfortable with our appearance, but not proud, not vain. We are not supposed to judge others by their appearance, but are implicitly expected to judge ourselves, to name and number our flaws, to be able to answer when asked, what parts of our bodies we would change, were we granted access to plastic surgery or three magic wishes.

Admitting to myself that perhaps I am looking at others because I want to be looked at is difficult. But to deny it would be false. Some have hope must lie in the belief that if I am looking for the beautiful parts in other people, someone is looking for them in me.

Freud said that voyeurism created tension through dichotomy. The voyeur finds pleasure in both the object itself and in self-identification with the object. The delight of looking comes both in the sheer beauty of Iris, and the pleasure in finding parts of myself in her.

It is within this tension that Rodin lived, that anyone who creates must live. Isn't all art, at least in part, the product of vanity? We observe our world, admiring form or movement, but isn't it our own vanity that inspires interpretation and recreation: choosing a color, drawing a line, sculpting a form, wording a sentence, and piecing a story. In this, we exhibit ourselves for the gawking eyes of the world.

Iris is a woman who can change her form at will, the rebellious sister of the ugly and vindictive Harpies. Though it is reported that she was beautiful, named for the rainbow and endowed with golden wings, I imagine Iris differently. My Iris eats overripe blueberries by the mouthful and though she is aware of the power in the curve of her hips, she thinks little of it. She picks indigo flowers from graves and escorts women's souls to the underworld. She told Zeus that even Hermes could do her job, then got the hell out of Greece.

Justin and I ride our bikes to the Mall and lock them up beside the sculpture garden. We ride the narrow escalators to the third floor of the perfectly circular building, as we have countless times. We enter the gallery voicelessly. I know where she is, tucked just inside a doorframe, hiding in the corner. I lead him to her.

Standing before her, Justin exhales. "She's hot," he says softly. We have come here because I want to see her again. I nod and step forward to examine Iris's disproportionately large feet. They are exquisitely arched and toed, and possess a quiet grace that is nearly swallowed by her labia. One leg is bent below her, the other stretched to the side. She sits on a pedestal so her torso is level with my eye. I outline the slope of her shoulder in the air with my fingertip.

"Yeah," he says--always one to appreciate the curve of a good line--but he looks away. "I cannot stop staring at it." His eyes are trained on the space between her thighs. I smile. It is good to see her again.

Reviews

The Fine Art of Collage or; T.S. Eliot Hits the Mosh Pit: *Curio: Grotesques and Satires from the Electronic Age* by Elizabeth Bachinsky

Jeanette Lynes

Curio: Grotesques and Satires from the Electronic Age. Elizabeth Bachinsky. Toronto: BookThug, 2005. ISBN 0 9737181 8 8. 111 pp. Pbk.

Published under Jay MillAr's very cool BookThug imprint, Elizabeth Bachinsky's *Curio* is an energized, endlessly inventive, often brilliant collection - a memorable collage of shifting poetic stances and rhetorical tropes. Bachinsky has distanced herself considerably from what has been the typical debut collection of lyric narrative, often confessional poems. The eight sections (plus one single-section, introductory prose poem entitled "On the Convention of Narrative in Literature") of her book are all quite different in both form and mood; they range, for example, from the spare, minimalist sequence of "Undressed And So Many Places to Go," to the faux-journals and epistolary discourse of "From the Secret Diaries of Antonin Artaud," to the palindromes (structured as double sonnets that unzip themselves and reverse) of "Spy Cam: Surveillance Series," to the Dadaist riffs of "The Pose Same Ran Am Sage."

Given this diversity, Bachinsky's collection has, as mentioned, more the feel of collage than 'the well-wrought urn,' and it's no accident that her book's epigraph is taken from the great collage artist, sound poet, and renegade Dadaist, Kurt Schwitters. Bachinsky's poetry is self-reflexive; her language is continually foregrounded, reinforcing this resonance between her aesthetic and the art of collage. When we look at a collage, our attention is drawn to the materials themselves; when we read Bachinsky, her language casts a powerful spell. Her poems explore representation, spectacle, mirrors. The collection's five palindrome poems - one of which appeared in Sandy Shreve and Kate Braid's terrific anthology, *In Fine Form* (2005) - are halls of mirrors in which we can never quite trust what we see; we're always looking back to see what has changed since we last looked. And the surveillance of the electronic age is like that, isn't it? These poetic "cams" Bachinsky has created are extraordinary not only for their formal verve, but for their suggestion of how form effects its own surveillance. Her poetic "cams" also pose an interesting philosophical question: can any reflection of the present moment wrest itself free from an already-recorded past? What do sonnets see when they look at themselves in the mirror? Read Bachinsky to find out.

Curio seems strongly invested in a critique of language and literary tradition. The range of diction in these poems is wild, the diversity of influence deliciously idiosyncratic. How often have we seen John Milton and Lisa Robertson acknowledged between the same covers? Bachinsky's willingness to range fearlessly through history sets her writing apart - or, at least places it in the company of equally daring poets like Robertson,

Maine's Jennifer Moxley, and Eliot himself. Bachinsky's poems also remind me, at times, of work by American writer Karen Volkman. Bachinsky forages through the past, defamiliarizing contemporary poetic language in poems like "She is Blond Sin." I love the linguistic cognitive dissonance and sly eroticism created here when words like "dandy kid" (evocative of the nineteen forties Jimmy Stewart movies) and "wanton hidden clit" (a morphing of archaic and contemporary diction) bump up against each other and share poetic proximity. *Curio* is an exciting linguistic mosh pit of language derived from the past five hundred years.

Bachinsky's "Lead the Wants" is a tour de force, a madcap 'translation' of Eliot's "The Wasteland," one of the great collage poems in western literature. Bachinsky's poem, with its inclusion of K-Mart and R.E.M. seems, in a way, the logical conclusion of "The Wasteland." To cite two examples from Bachinsky:

O O O O shat takes pear he tang hi –

Or:

Witt witt witt
Guj guj guj guj guj guj
Record duos fly
Re: e, tu

I have to admit, it took me awhile to discover Eliot's "O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag" from Bachinsky's "O O O O shat takes pear he rang hi" (and even longer to track down Eliot's Shakespeherian riff to Ziegfeld's Follies of 1912). But echoes emerge; we begin to hear the past. Same with Eliot's transplanted classical bird calls - "Twit twit twit/Jug jug jug jug jug jug," transplanted still further by Bachinsky as "Witt witt witt/Guj gujâ€¦." etc. Language is historicized, contextual. T. S. Eliot's "Wasteland," which sounded so strange to most of us who first studied it as undergraduates, comes to appear normalized, in time. Is this - ending up in a kind of linguistic suburbs - the fate of all poetic language? Hopefully not since, as Pound said, the poet's job is to 'make it new'. As part of her procedure for making it new, Bachinsky's driving questions seem to be: what can the status of poetic language be in the age of K-Mart, R.E.M., and the electronic revolution? Can the poet create anything more than a collage? What happened to Keats' well-wrought urn (or was that only ever a dream?). Will the Tower of Babel tip once and for all in the electronic age? Is the poetic past destined to be relegated to the status of mere *Curio*? Will the electronic revolution democratize language, or destroy it? Bachinsky is, I think, more interested in the process of exploring these questions than answering them - and, since she's a poet, I think this is as it should be.

Bachinsky should be lauded for raising big questions. We should also applaud her sheer moxie - who among us would have the courage to translate "The Wasteland?" For

poets of my (slightly older) generation, Eliot's poem remains too canonically enshrined to touch. I don't think Bachinsky's conversation with Eliot in *Curio* shows disrespect; if anything, it bodes well for the future, bespeaks a revitalized dialogue, suggesting as it does that Canada's new poets are willing to venture where some of us more tyrannized by canonicity (and a residual colonialism? We just assumed Eliot was British, he seemed British!) dared not go. Great to see our new wave of poets decolonize their imaginations. Elizabeth's Bachinsky's 'conversations' with literary tradition, an integral part of *Curio*, are lots of fun. Her willingness to engage in them carries forward the energy of some of Canada's most interesting poetry; George Bowering has had some pretty nifty conversations with Keats and Rilke, to cite only one example. Elizabeth Bachinsky is one of our new bright lights. Next year, I'm going to assign my college students "The Wasteland" by Eliot and "Lead the Wants" by Bachinsky. I can't wait already.

**'you have to name the silence': *Songs to Kill a Wíhtikow* by Neal McLeod
Tyler McCreary and Richard Milligan**

Songs to Kill a Wíhtikow Neal McLeod. Regina: Hagios Press, 2005 ISBN: 0973556765

In his debut book, *Songs to Kill a Wíhtikow*, Neal McLeod speaks back to the darkness haunting us as individuals and collectivities. He courageously accomplishes a representation of this inhabitation of specters through a shifting sardonic, disdainful wit and deceptively simple humour in a volume that combines his poetry with plates of his visual art. The poems, like the images, elicit textured imaginings of the hurt and the degradation of collective dispossession and of personal losses that comprise a colonial legacy. But finally, *Songs to Kill a Wíhtikow* speaks to the sheer resiliency of the spirit in struggle against these oppressions.

This oppressive darkness enters McLeod's poetry most prominently in the titular figure of the wíhtikow. Wíhtikow is a cannibal. Antisocial in the extreme, the wíhtikow turns inward from society and consumes other beings for his own narrowly conceived benefit. Within his poetry and art, McLeod deploys the wíhtikow as a powerful metaphor for the greed and individualism consuming our society, which he describes as "the attempt to swallow the light from the sky of the world." But McLeod also connects wíhtikow directly with acts of colonialism and racism as in the concluding (and timely) juxtaposition of "Wíhtikow Wandering":

>cops who drive brothers
to cold places
wíhtikow wanders
in the grey, concrete forest

Among the Cree, wíhtikow stories are common. These stories emphasize the importance of sharing for collective survival, and contribute to the creation (and maintenance) of an egalitarian culture that restrains greed in pursuit of the common good. Contrary to the binaries inveighed by missionaries upon Indigenous communities, McLeod evokes an understanding of both good and evil dwelling in all things, including Christianity. Wíhtikow destroys social relations and upsets the order of things, but is also an important part of ourselves and of everyday relations. McLeod's poems challenge problematically strict binaries of good and evil, particularly interrupting the notion of evil as something eternal because it silences the reality that darkness and "the wíhtikow" is embedded within us all: "my body / has also known / the fire of wíhtikow".

McLeod's poetry attempts to make sense of and transform this ever-present darkness through humour. He begins "Indian Love Poem" with a reversal reminiscent of the oft quoted Shakespearean sonnet: "her skin was golden brown / like KFC chicken." The invocation of branding as sardonic critique of (post)modern consumer culture is frequently deployed in the collection as it deals with contemporary modes of colonialism. The moment "when they opened KFC on the reserve" is treated

humourously in a poem centered on the image of "Rez Dogz" eating "KFC bones." In "Suburban Castration", "suburban regularity" is mocked for its mundane rigidity as "Safeway savings cards" are aligned with "sex twice a week" in a landscape where "all the houses look the same / all the stories sound the same." Though these two poems maintain a light and witty tone, the intrusions of Safeway and KFC, like the more explicitly ominous "long steel lines [that] steal the sanctity of the earth," are registered as darkness, as "shadows / in a land polluted by a new presence." And, to be sure, the speaker in one poem declares, "I didn't want any fast food culture / shake and bake shamanism."

In his introduction, McLeod self-consciously fashions himself a wîhtikôhkan, or clown, following the storytelling tradition of his ancestors. McLeod translates "wîhtikôhkan" as an imitation of wîhtikow, a figure who opens spaces for healing through mimicry and reversal. His work interweaves picture and sound, giving form and name to the Wîhtikow that dwells within us all. After first identifying and exposing our poisons, McLeod dreams and sings of the potential to heal our wounds:

>to know the light
you have to pass
through the darkness
to know the words
you have to name the silence

It is through language and story that people come to know their place. However, in the distorted colonial landscape, knowing place has a different ontology. McLeod writes of the struggle for self-respect and awareness in this environment; and he writes of the fundamental disconnect that exists between our present society and the ground on which we stand. Through making light of the darkness, while holding the threads of memory from people of this land since time immemorial, McLeod presents new angles from which to understand his and our locations within the geography of our time.

'Luck hassles the strung kite.' *Strung* by Brecken Rose Hancock

Holly Lunning

Strung. Brecken Rose Hancock. Design Jessica Butler. Saskatoon: JackPine Press, 2005. ISBN: 097379951X 19pp.

Strung is one of the latest releases from Saskatoon's JackPine Press, a publisher dedicated solely to chapbook production. Hancock's verse and Butler's design make *Strung* an arresting book, inside and out.

Hancock's eleven poems address issues of memory, family, grief, and loss. The first poem, "String Art Craft" introduces the string and ropes images that recur throughout the collection. The poem's speaker tells us "I made a picture of a sailboat / by twisting red string around pegs you'd nailed to a board." Sailboats, water, and childhood memories of swimming are laced into a meditation that "really, we should expect change," and the speaker calmly notes that "[i]n only two seasons Mom's / garden has grown over so I can't find the bluebells / she planted for my birthday." Hancock manages to discuss the emotional without becoming sentimental. Her speaker is precise about the losses and pain she suffers, but discusses her grief with an intellectual clarity that turns adversity into a space for a reflection and illustration of emotional strength and personal renewal.

For example, in "Hollyhocks by Fall" the speaker says she "asked you to notice the spring bulbs // planted along the fence, the passing of things that bloom / and the brown heads of the once-white tulips // sleeping in the soil." She notes that "losing a friend can seem small when compared / with the untiring way nature repeats itself." In the wake of personal loss, the speaker retains her composure and compassion for the person she is leaving; she reminds the other, "not to worry, every change is brilliant."

"Lag," the final poem, is the most striking piece in the collection. Here, Hancock's control of language and visual representation are extremely strong. The opening lines proclaim: "Grief is a door, strange how feral. It locks / twice, tooth in tooth against the jam, and seals / this house, an awful mess where all the / music plays at once." The speaker explains the abstract concept of grief in concrete and corporeal terms; Hancock describes these visual and aural experiences with rich language that envelopes the reader's ear and threatens to disorientate while promising to deliver one safely through "this madness."

Jessica Butler's design takes its cue from Hancock's description of the string sailboat in the opening poem; the book is fastened closed by wrapping "the string to the next peg, stilted constellation / wound by my hand." Small pegs are nailed to the front cover of the book, and the reader winds and unwinds a string around the series of pegs to open and close the book. The design is not only thematically appropriate for Hancock's work, it gives the reader the sense one is unwrapping some sort of textual treasure. As with all

of JackPine's books, each of the 75 limited edition copies are hand-assembled, and the quality of *Strung's* workmanship is high. This chapbook succeeds as a visual piece of art, as well as providing an intriguing sample of work from Hancock.

Contributors

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Alison Frost is from Brooklin, Ontario and now lives in Vancouver with her husband Lance and two cats Sprite and Monty - furry, grey good luck charms from Lumsden, Saskatchewan! Alison has had short fiction published in various Canadian journals. "Hello" belongs to her first collection, which will hopefully appear as an actual book one of these days.

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Dianne Miller

Dianne Miller divides her time between Saskatoon, where she teaches at the university, and her farm in Nova Scotia. She has published poems in *the Amethyst Review*, *Grain*, and *The Antigonish Review*. She is a member of the writers' group Sisters' Ink. Her poetry explores, among other things, the slippage between memory and history.

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Francine Sterle

Francine Sterle lives in northeastern Minnesota and is the author of a chapbook, *The White Bridge* (Poetry Harbor, 1999), as well as two full-length collections: *Every Bird is One Bird* (Tupelo Press, 2001) and *Nude in Winter* (forthcoming from Tupelo Press in 2006).

Glen Sorestad

Glen Sorestad is a well known Saskatoon poet, a Life Member of The League of Canadian Poets and was Saskatchewan's first Poet Laureate (2000-2004). He is the author of more than 15 books of poetry, the most recent *Blood & Bone*, *Ice & Stone* (Thistledown, 2005). His poems have been translated into several languages, including Finnish and Slovene; his poetry has appeared in over 40 anthologies and textbooks, as well as literary magazines and e-zines all over North America and in Europe.

Heidi Greco

Heidi Greco's poems and reviews have been widely published, both in print sources and online. A collection of her poems, *Rattlesnake Plantain*, came out in 2002 (Anvil Press). One of her poems is included in this spring's anthology from Harbour, *radiant danse uv being: A Poetic Portrait of bill bissett*. Website: www.outonthebiglimb.blogspot.com

Holly Lunning

Holly Lunning is a PhD candidate in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan. Her poetry has appeared in literary journals and anthologies, and has been broadcast on CBC radio. She is the author of *Sway* (ThistleDown, 2003) and a chapbook, *Plush* (JackPine, 2006).

Jan Conn

Jan Conn's sixth book of poetry is *Jaguar Rain* (Brick Books, 2006). She is a Research Scientist at the Wadsworth Center, New York State Department of Health, in Albany, NY and lives in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

Jeanette Lynes

Jeanette Lynes is the author of three collections of poetry. She is currently writer in residence at Saskatoon Public Library.

Jenny Ryan

Originally from Ontario, Jenny Ryan is currently finding her way in Saskatoon as a writer caught up in the career of a Children's Librarian. A long-time fan of Dorothy Parker's, Miss Ryan recently purchased her first cloche hat.

Karen McElrea

Karen McElrea's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Grain*, *Arc*, *Event*, *Wascana Review*, *The Prairie Journal*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *The Nashwaak Review*, *Vallum* and *echolocation*, in *Body Language* (Black Moss Press, 2003), and on Winnipeg buses for Poetry in Motion.

Contributions:

Landlorn -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

Kimmy Beach

Kimmy Beach's fourth poetry collection, *In Cars*, is forthcoming from Turnstone Press. She has published in journals across Canada and the U.K., including *CV2*, *Grain*, *Prairie Fire*, *Orbis* (U.K.), and *The Antigonish Review*. Kimmy was the 2005 International Guest Poet for the Dead Good Poets Society in Liverpool, U.K. Her work forms one fifth of *Chickweed* (chapbook), edited by Robert Kroetsch, and is included in *Listening with the Ear of the Heart: Writers at St. Peter's Abbey* (both from St. Peter's Press). Kimmy writes from Red Deer, Alberta, where she lives with her husband.

Contributions:

Roller Boogie [Wheelies Roller Rink, 1982] -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

Leslie Wayne Jones

Leslie Wayne Jones received his B.A. in English Literature at Rutgers University, his M.A. in Journalism and his M.F.A. in Creative Writing at The University of Arizona in Tucson. In 1984, Mr. Jones joined the IBM Corporation in Endicott, New York, where he worked as an editor and later as an award-winning scriptwriter and producer of high-end corporate video. After leaving IBM in 1991, Mr. Jones returned to Tucson. There he joined the core faculty of the MBA Program at the Eller School of Business and Public Administration and worked as a consultant to local businesses. Today Mr. Jones is a lecturer in the Department of English, and he has returned to writing fiction, inspired by the people of Tucson, his adopted home town.

Mandy Catron

Mandy Catron lives in Capitol Hill, Washington DC where she spends her days making espresso and riding her bike to free art museums. She loves rock climbing and puppies and websites that make fun of celebrities with bad fashion. She will receive her MFA in Nonfiction Writing from American University in May.

Contributions:

Contracting Iris -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

Mike Barnes

Mike Barnes has published five books: *Calm Jazz Sea* (poems), shortlisted for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award; *Aquarium* (stories), winner of the Danuta Gleed Award; *The Syllabus* (novel); *Contrary Angel* (stories); and *Catalogue Raisonn* (novel). A new collection of poems, *A Thaw Foretold* will be published by Biblioas is in June 2006.

Contributions:

Orange Light -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

Sprawl -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

Richard Milligan

Richard Milligan does ecological fieldwork in the summer and studies 18th century travel writing the rest of the time in pursuit of a Masters in English at the University of Saskatchewan.

Contributions:

'you have to name the silence': *Songs to Kill a Whitikow* by Neal McLeod -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

Tyler McCreary

Tyler McCreary is a Master's student in Geography at the University of Saskatchewan. His thesis research explores racial constructions of the Canadian prairies and how they are contested by anti-racist education.

Contributions:

'you have to name the silence': *Songs to Kill a Whtikow* by Neal McLeod – Issue Number 1, April 2006

Vivian Hansen

Vivian Hansen's poetry has been published widely in Canadian journals. Her fiction and nonfiction has appeared in many anthologies, most recently in *The Madwoman in the Academy*. (University of Calgary Press, 2003), and *Writing the Terrain* (University of Calgary Press, 2005). She has been the ghost-writer of four murder mysteries. Her chapbook of poetry *Never Call It Bird: the Melodies of Aids* came out in 1998. Her first full-length book of poetry *Leylines of My Flesh* was published by Touchwood Press in 2002. In 2004, she published *Angel Alley*, a chapbook about the victims of Jack the Ripper. She is past-president of the Writers Guild of Alberta and the Society of Poets, Bards and Storytellers. She has served as VP publishing and editor of *Forum* magazine, and Editor of *Freefall*. She has been a contributor to OOOO (Originality of Orality On-Line), and the 2005 Calgary Spoken Word Festival.