PATIENCE WHEATLEY

The Lover

I had a funny dream, Christine said. a man asked me to take down my panties behind the shed. I was frightened. And I did. It was Potto, she said.

Potto was tall and thin, with not much hair on top, he had a nice voice, and always brought us chocolates. He was our mother's friend who talked to her about stars and planets.

Potto just loves children, our mother said. he comes and plays with them all afternoon. I can get on with my astrological charts.

We would all go out to play baseball though the only one who could catch or hit a ball was Potto.

Our brother was really too young, Potto said, it was Christine and me he wanted to play with, and we all sat down to blackjack, with cowrie shell money.

He came one rainy day. We played a rough-and-tumble game indoors, and Potto put his hand between my legs his finger inside my panties.

I pulled away, red-faced, felt sick, but excited too and Christine, I could see, was jealous. Later I felt sicker. I couldn't cry. I don't like Potto, I told our mother. He never came to our house again and Christine blamed me.

CORNELIA C. HORNOSTY

Breaking the rules

It's that feeling of innocence, or maybe insensitivity, when I ask the hairdresser what language I'm hearing across the way. She stiffens and tries to continue cutting my hair as carefully as possible, trying like hell to be polite as she answers: Portuguese. And it's her Gran, and her mother is fixing the old woman's hair. She explains through almost clenched teeth that they tell her NOT to speak portuguese while in the family's hair studio. But Gran broke the rules. I try hard to smooth it over saying how I love the language and always meant to learn it and think it beautiful in song.

But to no avail, she is mortified and will never forgive me.

Patience Wheatley has had two books of poetry published by Goose Lane Editions and appeared most recently in Descant 114—North Africa.

Cornelia C. Hornosty lives in Victoria, B.C. Her poetry has been widely published in literary magazines.