

## 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.

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

## CORNELIA C. HORNSTY

### 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.

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