

Strings Go

by Michael Seidel

There are strings leaking out of the window. The battery has been going all night and is still going. I'm lucky, I guess you could say.

My sleep is better with the strings.

The plastic is many colors. Dirt brown, flag blue, green. I stick the edges into the window and roll them up. Inside, when the light's immature like this, it's like someone shook up paint cans and poured them through the sunroof.

I brought back a woman I met, so both seats are down. She's a woman about my age. Her hair is an ugly dry gray and mine's gone. That's how I know. This woman is naked to the waist and then nakeder below that. But she has socks on, red socks washed down to pink. Her legs are crossed at the ankles.

The plastic plays over her body in a sick way and I can smell it alive in the sun and I want to throw up. It's heating up in here and I throw up, right on the woman. She wakes up and says, "It smells like throw up in here."

The woman falls back asleep right after saying that, reaching her arms over her head. Suddenly it's a test of wills:

- Will she sleep longer? Or
- Will I be able to watch her sleep longer—the smell of plastic warming, the sound of strings going, kids and cars and the world starting up, the smell of throw up, the throw up on the woman, the smell of the woman—and not throw up again?

Her name is Jerrita. A man wrote a song about her once, another man wrote a rhymeless poem, several numbers have been written on

soggy placemats at the restaurant she works at, and a cop wrote a ticket she never paid. She has knuckles like my grandfather had, black hair in the coulees, and my throw up in her head hair. She could use a brushing, so I brush her but I have no brush so I use my hands, my fingers, the tips of my fingers. The strings go and I'll let them go until they go silent as ash and we need a jump. Then I'll wake the woman and send her to find someone.

