

Grace

by Tim Jones-Yelvington

Our counselor Kevin opened his guitar case. The case was battered and road-weary, but the guitar itself — a pearl! It glistened like Kevin himself, buffed and boffed. He had recently graduated, was applying to seminaries, which seemed a formality. I knew he was already as close to God as any human-being could possibly get.

We kept journals of our travels through Guatemala. We set time aside each morning for reflection. Where did you see Christ in Champerico? What acts has God called us to perform? I scratched Kevin's name in repetition. Kevin, Kevin, Kevin, Kevin. Play me your guitar. Sing me into heaven.

In Puerto Barrios, we rebuilt a church destroyed by flooding. I watched Kevin, how his wet white tank clung to his chest, how his shoulders rippled and dimpled and shook when he lifted weight, and I'd sneak into the Port-o-Potty to jack off.

We visited a maquila skirted by an electric fence. I wanted Kevin to press me against it, to feel charges pulse me from ahead and behind.

I'd pass beneath the high, open window when Kevin showered and imagine him inside, picture thighs, penis, steam.

At night, my stomach raged. Food didn't stay put, for a week I was laid down. I imagined myself sick with longing.

On the shelf above my bed, I unpacked, positioned, displayed my books, everything I thought Kevin could appreciate — texts on liberation theology, my New Revised Standard bible, albums by Bruce Cockburn.

I drew in my journal. Kevin, one arm around the guitar and the other around me. I thought this was all I ever wanted to be, an instrument he used to communicate his soul. I imagined my insides flushed with

Kevin, flushed with the Holy Spirit. In church bulletins, the Spirit was a dove, but I knew it was a song, a song Kevin sang, and whenever he sang, I knew the Spirit came inside me.

I thought about how the village flooded, how the waters rose to cover and destroy. I thought about how this brought us here, brought Kevin into my life and thought maybe God really did have a plan. No no no, I do not mean this as selfishly as it sounds. I meant we'd bring change, become instruments of God's grace. Together.

My friend Rachel began to wonder why I ignored her, grew jealous. She glanced over my shoulder during our morning journaling and I shrugged her off. He's straight, you moron, she said. He'll never love you. Think about Christ, I said. There are other kinds of love. Maybe that would be enough.

It wasn't. I followed him on his walk down to the river to swim. I hid in the undergrowth and watched him peel away his layers — Dear God! I pulled it out and wanked, watching him. Just before I came I heard him coming near — I must have rustled the reeds — and as his mouth closed around me, I felt the spread of grace.

