

Coming Home

Contributed by Emily Hunter
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the room is full of stories
but the words are written across weathered faces
not sheets of paper.
i feel shy beneath so many men's gaze
avert my eyes, wish there were women
at my table to serve.

the men thank me as i bring them
bowls full of chunky soup, they ask for bread.
i offer them coffee, water and suddenly
the separation between me and them
is blurred, temporarily smudged illegible.
we joke, talk amidst the clanging of cutlery
the sound of spoons scraping bowls,
mouths slurping coffee between conversation.
as i approach one man the smell of piss
hits me like a wall of sound, a scream
i steel myself against my reaction to turn away.
he shows me bracelets his brother taught him to make -
one wire and 72 beads.
he is first nations and amidst the constant torrent
of babbling chatter i hear the wisdom of his beliefs.
he is 33 years old and looks like 60 years
have dragged his tired body behind them.
as i move around the different men, i sense
i am dancing and i know with a joyful surprise
that here, in this dark and smelly church basement
i am dancing with the wild woman within,
as i serve the homeless and poor places
in myself.

Emily Hunter graduated from CHE in November 2005 with an MSc in Human Ecology.