

## VOLCANOES

*Donnell Hunter—Department of English*

After a fiery night Pacaya cools down.  
I swim through this swarm of faces  
in the Mercado of San Miguel, this babble  
of tongues, and try to remember,  
“Love as I have loved.” I buy a melon,  
six bananas, four avocados, and pay  
the full price with no haggle. “Gracias.”  
The vendor turns to her friend. They speak  
Cakchiquel. I hear, “gringo,” and feel  
the hair on my neck bristle. Her child  
looks up from playing and stares at me.

God made all children beautiful, but as  
we grow old our faces harden. We cling  
to the slights of childhood, to the voice  
of someone we loved, harsh when we meant  
no harm. I smile at the child. She hides  
dark eyes in her mother’s skirt, peeks out.  
I smile again.

Back on the street, I check my wallet.  
Agua, Pacaya, and Fuego look down.  
Perhaps they were the Gods of the Maya.  
Perhaps they also command us to remember  
the child of God who is in us, the face  
of a stranger who loved us enough to smile.

FROM MY CONDO ON THE 23RD FLOOR

*Donnell Hunter—Department of English*

When I am old and no one listens,  
I will count all the beats of my heart. Each one  
has a story to tell—don't forget. Someone  
will say, "Remember the grackle  
who sang to the sun each morning  
in Veracruz and the juggler with three  
oranges, the cars backed up in the street  
to watch?" The old man in the cart  
blinks twice. His horse turns to the right.  
José is leaving for work. His children  
wake from dreams too late to say good-bye  
to their father, too late to say they love him.  
They wake from dreams too late  
to say good-bye. José is leaving for work.  
The children blink twice, and the old horse  
turns down the right street to watch.  
The man sells his three oranges,  
while backed up cars honk at the juggler  
of Veracruz who sings to the sun  
on the wall. Someone says, "Don't forget—  
the grackle has a story to tell." I will count  
all the beats of my heart, each one,  
when I am old and no one listens.

## ASTERISKS

*Donnell Hunter—Department of English*

1.

When my side healed  
enough to fish, all the stars,  
those tiny asterisks to  
footnotes no one reads,  
were back in place.

There was this girl,  
but I shrank from her touch.

2.

I built a fire, just enough  
to mark the edge of the lake,

put trout on the coals to broil,  
and heard the chant of oarsmen

straining their backs against waves.  
“How’s fishing?” No answer.

Then a splash—the swimmer  
who always wants to be first.

3.

Clouds can tell more  
of the story: starlight  
to shadow, scars on the hill.  
Or you can read it yourself  
in the footnotes, trace  
with your fingertip each  
asterisk stamped in Braille.