



HART HOUSE REVIEW 2004



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PLAYA ZIPOLITE

Through the sheaves of pebble earth, the alleyways behind the playa are draped with rotten bicycles fastened, opiate eyes of some stray black cat, a man with a peg leg selling a watch for only 100 pesos (*From US!*) a mottled dog low and squat like a sausage carries its dead pup in-between mourning jaws. These are the stitches that bind the town.

The gray marble thoroughfare, leftover from some dictator's misspent youth a hundred years ago, an imitation of something no one can remember, is now draped and veined with black spiderwebs;

There are birds that trill their screams down to the Playa, Caught in cages with others *not of their species*, ready for more caging or a bed on a serving platter. An anemic dressed as Charlie Chaplin stands stock-still and points to a sign that reads: "One US dollar for foto, please."

The scrubbed sepia tiles that line the rich back streets, the chill air musk that surrenders to the tickle of tamale and the promise of lovers down on the Playa Zipolite where the pale blonde sand oozes to kiss the roots of coconut palms, heaving and thundering with power only the dead can muster.

The ripe calves, the wide-brimmed hats of drunk tourists, the caesarian scars, the demolished sandcastles, the bulbous Blue conch shells eating up sand as if they were ravenous.

II

Some jewel in a tenement behind the Figo Store shakes a Byzantine rug out of her window.

The watching men swell with the gardenia she oozes.
The rug furls and unfurls in the wind and when she

pulls it in, the rug momentarily catches on the syphilitic wrought-iron window bars and lumps form in the mens' throats. Pale olive wood shutters blink closed and then they return to work after siesta.

Here they sleep with no linen.
There is beer in the vending machines.
The shrimp sob into your mouth.

The needle spires of Cathedral pierce the heavens until they abide. The bread in the run-down courtyard is devoured by damp seagulls. Thick brown hands pat a gray rainbow of fish-scales and sizzle them in olive oil and coarse salt how it tastes like they remember.

In the modern Figo Store the milk goes rancid under neon lights, bright oranges protrude from boxes, the fruits are ripe; the white chickens are slung on twine and old women with wedding rings grown on point and say "The same today, por favor." The checkout girls hum foreign hits.

The moon never fully appears; only a pale stripe on the blacked-out sky, a banana on its side, guide books don't talk about the violent rip tides.

Down on the Playa, the sun hollows its cheeks and drapes the sand with a sleepy forgetfulness; the greens are marinated, the eggs are boiled, the chilies chopped, coarse black hair is parted, the cheeks shaved with straight razor and musky lather, the oily and carved shutters grow tired again and blink to sleep as wet hungry gulls gather to survey and savor the leftovers of the day as the ocean churns each grain of sadness to pearl.