

2005

Till Human Voices Wake Us

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Recommended Citation

Davis, Laura (2005) "Till Human Voices Wake Us," *Cedarville Review*: Vol. 8, Article 5.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/cedarvillereview/vol8/iss1/5>

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Keywords

Poetry

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Till Human Voices Wake Us

by Laura Davis

For an etherized instant you—or whatever makes you you—slid silently out of your body and watched the circus milling in the room below from the darkness gathered in the corner of the wood-ribbed ceiling.

What was left of you stood pontificating loudly on some incredibly complex point of inquiry. The room was packed with potential art, draped all in black, shining behind thick dark-rimmed glass, demurely tied back in sleek brown ponytails, or spiky and wearing converse shoes.

Somewhere off in the corner the empty you heard a raspy whisper surrounded by tall, thin laughs, and cool amused glances flit aimlessly across the room to rest on your shoulder like pinned monarch butterflies.

The yellow lamplight echoed with high art as, bored with Michelangelo, you wished you were talking to someone else.

During a lull-in-conversation the nervous, faceless, aimless whisper slides up the wood-paneled wall, curling into the details like a thread of cigarette smoke, rising into the darkness—your companion in the corner of the ceiling.

As whatever makes you you sees stilly from the ceiling, your black sheik is only gaudy red and yellow satin.

Your prepared face, the white grease paint one, has curling, painted-on lips that smile up dumbly at the ceiling—you in such a beguiling way that you realize you can't disown them—they already own you.

Of course, the room is full of painted faces; the curling red corners of mouths swirl and fill the room with pure red wool yarn that the tree lady hums over with a knowing click of knitting needles until she transforms it before your eyes into an exquisite red wool scarf.

And, as the room fills with red wool, you drown, wet with silence and stillness.

The tall laughs tickle like tiny wriggling wings and the smoky whisper is absorbed, leaving only a warm smell of burnt tobacco lingering around your neck as the real you—whatever that means—slips out into a luminous woody night.