

Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

Volume 5 | Issue 2

Article 30

January 2006

DNA

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Recommended Citation

Boynton, Victoria (2006) "DNA," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*. Vol. 5: Iss. 2, Article 30.
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol5/iss2/30>

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DNA

Victoria Boynton

Before you go in, the undertaker warns you
about his eyes, and indeed, they are bruised
and collapsed, like tents without poles.
The donor bank doesn't want his heart
or his liver either. "Young for rejection,"
they murmured.

They will push him off to the fire soon
on those tiny gurney wheels,
but for now, it's you
and the kids and your mom and sister.
It's early still.
His mom's in the air.

And it's funny how you want
to sit and drink out of that face,
that bowl of his head above the sheet,
that empty, shining plate.
But there's no chair anywhere—
economy arrangements—
no fault of yours or anyone's.
You stand and shade yourself with your hand;
he is so bright it hurts.

And then you look up and see his DNA
splitting itself among you all
like a Jesus cracker;
see the laced dance in your sister's kids
and your boy with his father's tendons in his hands
and your sister's girl whom the snake bit and
shook her face out and those eyes,
stamped like cookies with the father-cutter
no doubt there, despite everything.

Here we are, claimed things, roped
in this insistent helix, its double spun twists
embrace this broken strand,
stitched up, somehow,
a snarled ball of freezing worms
keeping themselves warm,
waiting for the fire.