

"The Boarding School"

Louise Halfe

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The Boarding School

In the late fall
ice waited
outside our cabin.

Inside
crackling fire
licked the guts
of the woodstove.
The coal oil lamp
flickered in the
one-room shack.

Two white-skins
talked in tongues.
Father's long face
stretched further
to the floor.
Mother's crimson cheeks
turned like swirling
ashes
in the stove-pipe.

Behind
Mother's draping dress
a six-year-old sister.
Her small fist
white against
brown skin.

I sat behind a
thick home-made
wooden table,
trembling.
My stomach couldn't
hold
the fresh cinnamon roll.

The air was
wrapped in
raven darkness.

Namoya maskoc.
It's a mistake.
Father's voice
shook.
Mother swayed.

The white-skins
left.
The cold seeped in the
cracks of the door,
its fingers wrapped
in silence.

The world
was silent.

The family gone.