

Dreaming Home

STORIES BY EMERGING WRITERS

SELECTED BY

Bethany Gibson

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Introduction

MY NIECE WAS BORN a year ago, on an island in the Georgia Strait. We all went west for the birth: my brother from Montreal, my parents and I from Toronto. Odessa arrived three weeks late, when most of us had returned to our respective homes, jobs, and commitments. I remember, the night she was born, sitting on the floor next to the phone, receiving the news from B.C. and calling my father on the Toronto Island, my brother in Montreal, and my partner in Manitoba. And I remember feeling something like melancholy, which was distinct from all the other heightened emotions that attend a birth and more than the frustration of not being able to celebrate with those who were also rejoicing. It was a sense of disorientation that I later recognized as homesickness. Although I was, in effect, the only one “home,” in the city where we all grew up, the people who are home to me – those who define me, who are responsible for my sense of belonging, my earliest and lasting conviction that this is where I came from – were not in this place. So home was elsewhere, floating somewhere over Saskatchewan.

These nine stories are about home, whether that home is a place, a person, or a sense of security or belonging. Home is both a real and a psychic place which we leave behind again and again, which we

create and then recreate, and which we arrive at, more or less happy to have arrived.

Home is a place and an experience of family, childhood memories, a collection of sensory impressions. It is where “the rugs were islands with their own landmarks” (*Personal Effects*). It is a new town, “the unfamiliar shape of another life” (*Serendipity*), and the immigrant's struggle to feel at home in a new country, surrounded by new customs and people (*Going Native* and *Devika*). Home is family, loyalties to parents or siblings, and the desire to protect and be protected (*Listening to the Angels*). It is the sense of belonging derived from the company of friends, someone with whom the inside of a car can be “the best place I have known” (*Dime Bag Girl*). It is inhabiting, or being inhabited by, another (*The Friend*). Home is domestic union, the “nest” made by partnership and marriage (*The Cost of Lamb*). And it is something left behind, never revisited (*Building Marrakesh*).

These stories come from first collections, published by emerging writers – those whose names have begun to seep into our consciousness, whose writing we have begun to recognize as well worth reading.

Above and beyond the question of theme – which is in many ways a contrivance – the main criterion for inclusion was simply that the stories be, in my estimation, the best. These are glorious stories. They do for me what good writing has always done: take me in and provide meaning and respite from the world outside, make me feel that I am home.

Bethany Gibson