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## On Avenida 4

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# On Avenida 4

*Lorna Van Gilst*

## Dawn

Just before El Sol  
peers over the mountain,  
street dogs bark  
and roosters crow  
from the barrio,  
where morning creeps up  
pink-edged and hopeful,  
tinging the red-block dwellings  
pressed row upon row  
into the rocky ledge,  
laced by long-fingered fronds  
of wild cambur trees  
and scrubs of wild locust,  
roots knuckled  
to the bony face of the slope.

Boldly now,  
sunlight spills over the  
red-tile roofs  
down the avenue  
into the plaza.

. . . . .

Dark-eyed *chico* works the streets,  
his mother's coffee thermos  
dangling from one thumb—  
*Cafecito, cafecito, cafecito*  
This little man, so confident—  
a fist of paper cups.  
“¿Cuántos?” How much?  
“*Dos cien*”—ten cents—  
three swallows in a paper cup.  
Two silver coins now pressed  
into the supple little hand—  
*Cafecito, cafecito, cafecito*—  
Halfway to breakfast.

## Body Parts

At Ripley's Fabrica on Avenida 4  
each morning I step past  
five suave half-manikans  
lined up outside the door—  
black, stunning yellow, pale blue, deep olive, tangerine—  
sleek stretchy lycra hugging shapely hips,  
smooth thighs, tight knees, bell bottoms flared  
around glass-slipped feet  
going nowhere.

And suspended on the wall above  
Three stretch-knit torsos  
—headless, heartless—  
waiting for a match.

## Close Encounter

“Oh, Profie,” she greets me  
there on the street,  
cheek to cheek, in the Latin way,  
Asks how I am—*¿Como estas?*  
Her soft supple Spanish piling up  
around me like a cloud—  
*Remember me—she says—you visited  
my home, taught my José.*  
“Oh, si,” I say—I have met  
five hundred one Josés—  
She says come to her *puesto*  
in El Mercado Principal—third floor—  
She kisses me good-bye,  
“*Hasta luego*”  
disappears into a bus . . .  
*Adios, mother of José.*