

8-2013

Greyhound, 1984

Lisa K. Sandlin

University of Nebraska at Omaha, lksandlin@unomaha.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/wrtrswrkshpfacpub>

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), and the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sandlin, Lisa K., "Greyhound, 1984" (2013). *Writer's Workshop Faculty Publications*. 1.
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/wrtrswrkshpfacpub/1>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by the Writer's Workshop at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Writer's Workshop Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



Greyhound, 1984

(for Brian)

A couple in the back row is smoking in the dark but Philip doesn't; cigarettes can't help anything. He only ever propped the Gauloise between middle and index fingers and puffed to appear less on the fringe. Besides, lethargy paralyzes him. His head sinks sideways onto the wadded jacket that once owned its own white satin hanger. His friends used to kid him about it. Philip, they said, would throw himself in a puddle so the Armani could walk across.

In Philip's dream, Luis is reading *Crime and Punishment*, half-glasses slipping down his redone nose. Victor is bantering with Colin and with the blond waitress who sets before him a strawberry shortcake drenched in lethal red syrup. Victor gives Philip a *what-can-you-do?* smile and lifts his fork. Philip smiles back and kisses them all. Tucks his LAX ticket suavely, without having to look, into the Armani's inner pocket.

He awakes to a blur, shivering in the bus's arctic air conditioning, shaking off the preposterous dream. Luis—with a book. Philip can feel his eyes compress into an ironic cast. Luis should have been lounging in limp terry cloth, bunioned dancer's feet slung over a recliner arm. Or stripped to the waist, black hair flinging sweat, showing off for the guitarist and any lingering students, dancing for the craze of it. He should have been telling Philip—too late, it was probably already too late when he dropped this one: "They wouldn't go with me in Spain. They won't go with any American boys. Not with this *thing* out there."

Philip unfurls the Armani and drapes it over his chest, snugs it under his stubbled chin. This thing. This murdering *whatever-it-is*. Why hadn't he read about AIDS in Titanic-height headlines? How long had Luis known? How much had any of his friends known about it? His friends. And Philip, boy hayseed in Hollywood, gaga with the lights and the nights and his menial little wonderful job at Paramount: script-reader.

The scenery outside his window—endless cornfields—is canned, sepia; one glance puts it to rest. The silly, vivid dream lingers. As if Victor would touch dessert in a diner. Victor lived on wheat grass smoothies, had Philip tote them to the hospital during his bout with pneumocystis. And not a hint of the fire-eater Victor morphed into at Colin's memorial service: cursing Ronald Reagan—*not a nickel for research, not for queers*—stalking behind the altar to spit out the single vanilla candle Colin's poor sister had placed there.

The bus station floor is filthy with cigarette butts and flattened candy wrappers. Philip takes himself and his two bags outside to sit on the curb, careful to keep away from the trees where grackles are twittering and shitting. He waits there for his mother to pick him up in the Chrysler. His father, he knows, will be elsewhere when they get home.

An Asian man with one arm hunkers down beside him. The stranger's knees jut against his chest; his buttocks swing above the curb. A Greyhound brochure wilts from his breast pocket next to the pinned-up sleeve, and his brown leather shoes lack laces. Philip inches away. Crab-like, the man sidles after him, a small book supported on his knee. He presses the pages open to a drawing of two sailors with brawny shoulders and nipped-in waists. The sailor in front is bracing himself

on a chair. The man keeps shoving the book at Philip, chopping his head forward, barking the same harsh phrase, maybe saying, *Do you understand? Do you understand?*

—Lisa Sandlin

Lisa Sandlin is the author of *The Famous Thing About Death*, *Message to the Nurse of Dreams* (both from Cinco Puntos Press), *In the River Province* (SMU Press), and *You Who Make the Sky Bend* (Pinyon Press). She has a story in Akashic Press's forthcoming *Best of Noir* anthology, and she teaches in the Writer's Workshop at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.