
Pro Rege

Volume 40
Number 2 *Fine Arts Issue 2011*

Article 9

December 2011

Scratch Tickets

Howard Schaap
Dordt College, howard.schaap@dordt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schaap, Howard (2011) "Scratch Tickets," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 40: No. 2, 12 - 13.
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol40/iss2/9

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Scratch Tickets

Howard Schaap

We sit at a corner table in this new coffee shop:
sporadic tables and chairs on a bare concrete floor,
waitresses barricaded behind their assembly line façade,
shouting orders amongst the cathartic grinding, till-clicking, steamer-hissing.
The room's innards lie open to the roof to reveal the machinations
of the heating and cooling systems in would-be honesty
where our talk and the room's heat dissipate
to perch on the copper piping
like gargoyles.

We're tucked into the farthest corner, at a table for two,
the stem and foot slightly unbalanced so that it wobbles slightly,
the noodley, fretwork chair-backs a minimalist support skeleton I can't quite trust.
We're scratching the lotto tickets you won on a radio call-in show on your commute,
called to by the sexy voice of the face-for-radio, a conspiratorial alto set adrift
in the air from some cramped studio stuffed away in an industrial park,
the Spirit Mother eliciting responses from eager suppliants,
the number preset in your cellphone for just such a need.

We wait for your cancer tests, scratching the face off fate's game
while somewhere, according to one story, those same fates hold our cards
and scratch to reveal faces. The sufferers I know all come from our church:
a twelve-year-old girl with straw hair whose parents' marriage will break
as she wastes away, though, years after she's buried, they both still attend,
both with new mates, an odd multiplication;
the silver-haired bachelor with inch-thick bifocals
whose full house includes diabetes and no doubt loneliness
but who shows up like the irreplaceable odd uncle
for our weekly family reunions;
the tight-perm-hair lady who always sits by the organ,
anti-Lot's wife, who has unswervingly turned back brain tumors now twice
by remaining all-focused on the backlit cross behind the pulpit
and taking faithfully good medicine or, more realistically,
tainted semi-poison antidotes whose sum total
still tallies as good.

Now I take the thick-necked, bullet-headed George Washington,
the precision grooves of the machined-edged coin the necessary leverage
to grind off the silver veil and reveal our poker hand, now you.
But no matter what we think we've won but haven't,
it's you and I that indeed play, that have
this afternoon under this odd, trendy tree,
the serpent of doubt whispering above our heads,
sipping the good fruit of a ravaged earth
on this solid surface of a swiftly tilting planet.