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# Pro Rege

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Volume 27  
Number 2 *Arts Issue* 1998

Article 11

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December 1998

## Disconnected

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### Recommended Citation

Van Gilst, Lorna (1998) "Disconnected," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 27: No. 2, 13.  
Available at: [http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro\\_rege/vol27/iss2/11](http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol27/iss2/11)

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A quarterly faculty publication of  
Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa

# Disconnected

Lorna Van Gilst

Call me, she says—my young Venezuelan friend—  
Call me. I want that we talk English.  
Why don't you call me?

And I do call. But the line is forever *ocupada*.

At mid-morning, when I can get through,  
Carmencita is still in bed,  
but she says *Buenos dias* in a croaky voice  
that really wishes it were still asleep.

Carmencita, who is only 18 and  
fatherless since age 10—

Why? she asks.

Where is God?

I need my *papá*.

Carmencita, with the slender arms  
and creamy skin,  
eyes like black onyx in pools of milk—  
eyes that search for God.

I want to go to the church with you, she says.  
Will you take me?

But when I go to pick her up,  
she is sleeping.

At last she drapes her drowsy head  
over the window sill  
three floors above.

*Oh, mi amor*, she says.

My mother is *enferma*, ill—

But I know her mother is far away in Maracaibo.

I leave on holiday.

*Oh, mi amor*, she says before I go.

Call me when you come back.

When is your birthday?

I give you a wonderful present.

I come back. I wait a week.

Then I call.

But the phone rings and rings.

And another week.

But the phone rings and rings and rings.

And the croaky voice  
never answers the call.