

WILLIAM SNYDER

THE DUNES WAS HARDLY BUILT ON LOVE

Lord, lord, Sherry would say, though it was *lerd, lerd* when she'd say it. And she says it now—in '73, in Las Vegas, at the Dunes, at the Sultan's Table, on our honeymoon, on her father's dime—plane ride, queen-size bed, pocketful of bills he's slipped us. Soft, white tablecloths, three-knife settings. Wine. Arturo Romero and his Magic Violins—black tux tails, white puffed shirts, black leather shoes. *Lerd, lerd*. We listen—how can we not, seven men bowing "Cielito Lindo"—I know it from the Alfred books I teach at home, kids in the lesson cubes fretting, me pinching my lobes to stay awake.

Aye, yi yi yi. We've lost ten dollars to the slots, seen Lake Mead, returned for dessert. Room service. But now tenderloin, Chateaubriand, soft white towel on the waiter's arm, Arturo bowing another booth—no tip from ours. Well, look at us. Wire-rimmed me—beard, hair, corduroy jacket with faux leather buttons. Sherry—beige dress bought at Suzie's, where she works. What do we know about propriety, compromise? Me, who scratches nickels from my music gigs, she, who danced on poles in San Francisco.

Two tables over, the violins hum and trill,
and Arturo—I can see it now—has broken
bow hairs, three snapping loose near his jaw.
We would snap too, Sherry and I, in
the shortest of whiles—come loose, flail,
twist away from that honeymoon,
those dollars, each other. We lacked
what it took for love. *Temporary*, we said, *take
a little time apart*. But Sherry kept the house
and the dogs. I kept the pickup.
And after, we hardly ever spoke again.