

1975

Town

Gary Soto

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An old man said he's not the father.
Watchmen demanded to see all the papers—
the baby cried. Sheep blocked the road.
Three cars, a Porsche, Triumph and a Ferrari
pulled up. Three men stepped out
and three women, more graceful than angels.
They asked for directions. Fingered lambs.
Give us some money, the watchmen pleaded.
They gave them Dior perfume, a fur coat
and a check from the Bank of England.
The three women stood quietly,
glancing at the stars.
What about that bright one?
There was white frost.
In the hut, the little voice fell silent.
A Porsche, Triumph and a Ferrari
on a trip, humming like dragonflies.
Shepherds told the herd to move on.

Is the child dead?
Children never die.

Translated by Nicholas Kolumban

Town / Gary Soto

When you looked back
The blind whose pupils were just visible
Under a whiteness, and yet
Fading like twin stars,
Opened their hands
And you turned away.
The town smelled of tripe
Pulled from an ox
And hanging—
Smoke, fruit wrinkling
Or bearded with gnats.
The streets shone with rain.

After the rain
You wore the heat like a shirt,
You drank until your mouth
Hung open and no longer

