

# Miguel

*Peter Richardson*

I meet Miguel  
bear hugging him from behind  
tense tendons in his neck  
rage squeezing out his eyes:  
one thick tear,  
a spot grows  
dark on my sleeve.

A good looking, wiry, small boy.  
Wants to be a boxer.  
When he's off task, I get in his face,  
stern reprimand, hand on one shoulder, he counters:  
*-Ud. no es mi papá.*

Two scars nicked  
in the back of his close-cropped head  
like someone snuck up from behind  
and tried to take a bite.

A friend offers him some Cheez-its.  
He takes one, looks at it,  
crosses himself,  
kisses the Cheez-it,  
tosses it in his mouth.  
He and the friend look at each other,  
laugh.

*-¿Por qué viniste?*  
*-Vinieron mis papás.*

Playing basketball on the indoor court  
eyes on a ball sailing over his head  
he backpedals then turns to run,  
still looking at the ball. He smashes into a column,  
hits his head solid.

Never saw it coming.  
Stifled sob, sucking breath in  
through clenched teeth.  
No words.  
At lunch, Miguel eats everything on his plate.  
On the court, he jumps well. Dives after loose balls.  
Not afraid to put up his shot.  
In class, all he asks is some free time.  
Straight for the Tinker Toys,  
he makes an airplane.  
Every time.

Tomasov says, categorical:  
"He's special ed."

At home  
Nintendo is a drug.  
Bad graphics, easy highs.  
A banal riff, same jingle over and over.  
No words, nothing to read.  
Nothing to say.

Some space, a pair of skates,  
free time, a chance to look at the pictures.

Returning home from a field trip  
to Ellis Island  
a long way to walk among dense buildings.  
-*Maestro, me duele la barriga.*  
-*Ya sé; ya me dijiste.*  
-*Me duele.*  
-*¿Qué hago? ¿Qué puedo hacer?*  
-...  
-*¿Te cargo?*

No answer.