

## CARMEN LOMAS GARZA

*Cakewalk, 1987*

Oil and Alkyd on Canvas, 48 x 36 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST. PHOTO: M. LEE FATHERREE

## TEMMA EHRENFELD

# After the New Mexico Wedding

I met Lily at a wedding. She's in a red dress and pink eye shadow and tells me she left her husband, a good man, seeking "fire." Now friends, we go out to see this land beset by the worst drought since the one that pushed the Pueblo here to the Rio Grande, where they dug taproot for soap and lived in rock caves so round and smooth it is inconceivable that they were made by men, and by hand.

Strangers cheer me on through the window at the Griddle House when I dance in the motel parking lot under an awning in the choking heat, with my iPod, alone. "You made an old dog happy," a woman says to me, as the low-slung, cloudy-eyed mutt comes towards me and I stroke his head. Years ago, we danced in the streets, danced and sang at parties even when we were grown. So the kinds of dance have multiplied—ballet, jazz, salsa, swing, Western swing, ballroom, tango, Scottish, five winds—along with long weekends and week-long summer camps, but simply to go out in public and dance? Reason for applause, a memory that we are still the same species that lived in those caves and danced around fires, Lily, before any woman could leave her man in search of it, for wouldn't she have been killed, a rock flung at her head?

Dance outdoors, dance a child to sleep, so easy to tucker out your little one until he goes down. Where might you be now if you whispered to your husband when you were disappointed, "Let's dance now," and stepped out of bed; if you held him in a cave, if you built an open fire, if you swung your hips from side to side and lifted your arms? Oh Lily, I want to hold myself in my hand like a man the easy way they do. I want you to circle around me, and I around you, so I circle myself in the parking lot of the motel near the airport in Albuquerque with pillows so thick a Pueblo would not know what to do with his head for fresh air as the sunset spreads across the sky over the warehouses and fast-food joints and motels.

**Temma Ehrenfeld**, an independent editor and writer in New York, is ghostwriting a memoir for a neurosurgeon. Her journalism has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, *Newsweek*, and *Fortune*, and her literary work in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *Prism International* and elsewhere.