

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 1992

by Denise Duhamel

The first night of the Rodney King riots my then-boyfriend convinced me to stay home though I wanted to go to the Nuyorican Poets Café where there was a protest open mic. "It could get violent," he said. Because I was somewhat self-actualized, I refrained from calling him a coward—men, I thought, can be afraid too. I was confused as he seemed so much more political than I was. He could name all the American senators and battle dates that were smudges of scrambled time in my brain. He had lived through a coup in another country. He wasn't willing to join in demonstrations and, earlier in the day, predicted the looting that would happen in L.A. I'm not blaming him but blaming myself for not going alone, for all the times I've stayed quiet, tucked my neck deep in my collar, though revolution is just around the corner—the guillotine and Third Estate. My boyfriend and I stayed in playing Scrabble, feasting on vanilla Sara Lee cake.