



THIS CITY BUS

Writing from Albany Park, Bezazian, Chicago Lawn, and Mabel Manning Branch Libraries,
Nicholson Technology Academy, and St. Leonard's House

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Photography by [Bill Guerriero](#)

Bleeding Hands **Edward Weithers**

My own hands are bleeding
from the weight of burdens.
Ever since I can remember,
I walked around carrying a heavy load—mine
as well as other people's. Nicked skin,
I spill blood. My teeth are clenched.
My finger is on the button.
I just want the pain to end. But,
as I start to press the button
I hear a small, still voice say,
"Carry on. It will be all right in the end.
I will not put nothing on you
that you can't bear.
Just believe.
I've been with you every step of the way."

PIGEONS **Virginia Hannemann**

Pigeons are like poor people. They're always looking for food and people give it to them grudgingly. They're everywhere, and no one appreciates them, perhaps because they freely shit all over the place. But they do keep us company. As I am shivering on the El platform under the heat lamp, pigeons plump their feathers and coo right along with me. Pigeons accompany us in the park as we eat our lunches or sun ourselves. I had a pigeon take a donut right out of my hand.

Pigeons are also good to eat. You sneak up on a pigeon, offer it a donut, and catch it. You snap its neck, put it in a sack, go on to the next one, and collect a few of them. You put them in a feather-plucking machine, which you can rent for a couple of dollars from the hardware store. You can use

their feathers to make a chicken-man costume. Or make pillows. Pigeon feathers are special. In addition to their iridescence, they have magical properties. You can make fans out of them to keep insects away. If an insect comes close, the feathers wrap around it and that insect is toast. Also, when you put a pillow of pigeon feathers underneath your head, you will dream of socializing on phone wires.

MOTHER

Carolyn Stewart

I am not my mother.

My mother was beautiful, outspoken, smart, and brutally honest. She assessed me with a critical eye. She loved me, but it was a hard love.

My mother took no stuff.

My mother expected excellence.

Excellence in my studies. Everything clean, ironed, and pressed neatly.

Even sheets.

My mother was talented. She could play the piano and she could sew. My sisters and I wore exquisite, handsewn, matching outfits. Dresses with jackets, matching hats, gloves, tights, and shoes designed by my mother.

My mother is no longer with me, but now I understand her. I am not my mother, but my children say I am.