

# The Others Are Strangers

RASHAAN ALEXIS MENESES

Ewan could remember lots of things. Robert the Bruce was crowned king in 1306. James the Fourth signed for peace with Henry the Seventh in 1502, and the new Parliament building was opened in October 2009. The last one was easy because Ewan wanted to go to the Queen's inauguration, but the divorce was just being finalized and everyone said family needed to be together.

Despite all these dates that floated in his head, a constellation of facts with no clear order, Ewan could remember but a faint memory long, long ago, of himself, Callum, Mum, and Dad there at that rickety kitchen table, the same humming refrigerator knocking noise into their Friday dinner, as Dad kept shadow-boxing, showing Ewan how to throw a punch. Was it what Callum said or his father's reaction that made all four practically spit out their food in hysteria? It was a belly-holding kind of laugh, a giggle fever going round and round the table in fits. Ewan didn't know the kitchen light could get so bright. He hadn't seen cheeks so red from humor. Now he wanted that ache more than anything. A feel-good, stomach-stitched ache that pinched his cheeks and made him almost tear up.

Sitting at a restaurant now, Ewan, his dad, his brother and half brother, all at the corner table, each the furthest

distance from a laugh, and not even the scene across the street could guarantee the crack of a smile. Ewan was sure he had come to know the limit of laughter, so he said nothing. Though it seemed next to impossible, he kept the splendor of the spectacle, that woman in the window, to himself and wondered how long it would last. When would the secret spill?

He watched, pretending he wasn't, and still tried his hardest to listen, even though Callum wasn't listening, and Callum was sitting right next to their father, side by side, just an inch apart, sharing the same rigid nose-line, same set jaw that looked ready to crack under that unconscious grimace they both had. Callum looked more and more like their father. Ewan hadn't noticed until now. It had been four months since Dad returned, four months, three weeks, and five days. The kitchen calendar reminded them, when their memories failed, but Ewan's hadn't. He kept count on his own without having to check that one-page calendar from the Chinese take-away restaurant near their house.

The rest of this story is available only  
to *New Letters* subscribers. Use our "Comments"  
box to request that the issue with this story  
start your subscription.

[Click here to join us as a \*New Letters\* subscriber.](#)