

MIKE CHAULK

The Canada Goose

The Canada Goose can live 23.5 years; grows up in Southwestern Ontario mostly, a distance of from; slowly though earlier than most butts up against its skin; comes home one day from school and asks its mother why it and Ralph are the only two black kids in its class, like why is it black and why is Ralph black and why are they the only ones, to which its mother responds that Ralph is Filipino, and that it itself, laughs, is not black at all—this becoming a family joke; would tell others its age when asked what it was, where from, that it just tans real easy, that it can't help it, and moves its forearm into the shade; denies; learns later or understands then, as no secret, that it is a good percent, all this time a good percent, and its skin a good percent, and half its family and so on and finally its father put in the work, the bureaucratic hassle of getting his status after all them years and time away from Labrador, his young career flying Otters and Beavers in and out of camps, in and out of Rigolet, Nain, Makkovik, Hopedale, you name it he was flying there and even his own time at camp, the hunts, trapping, the trip he took with it to Mulligan, on Lake Melville some hours out of Goose Bay where ducks were killed, posed with and rifles, a moose on the river, them all in the canoe: the father, the grandfather who grew up in North West River and like a legend to it lived hard off those he hunted and trapped and caribou ringalls and bakeapples, like yes b'y, like the kid's gotta experience all this, as it should and did and cries when its GameBoy loses charge, like yes b'y you're too far out if the smell at the stove's getting to you like that, the game meat, your

GameBoy, the loneliness of the woods at night,
the sting and drag of flies lifting chunks from that
skin, the Big Land—; never talked about it too
much until later learned, it being then, it thought,
up against its friends and parties and a more or
less passable difference; said it just tans real
easy; said it never burns, just tans, always tans;
says now this fact, the fact of its skin because some
percent Inuit, some Cree; says with love
now; says without knowing how to say it right,
born far from, out of; says it proud though
hesitates at times; learns and never learns
enough or feels quite; tans, yes; dies.