

Balloon Score

"Watch out for the flies Carlos"

Mr Perfect blue teeshirt wearing
Blond haired shoulders rounded
Looking down soulful little nine
Year old says to the busboy.

He stands officially aside so Carlos
Can do his job. Carlos smiles.

"Do you wan' da ballooons? 'Der
Was a party last night. Dey left 'em
Heeere."

A crowd of red balloons hangs out
Under the canopy of the patio, just
Waiting.

There is a pause. Somehow, the kid
Knows not to ask. It is a measure of
Manners. And somehow, Carlos
Knows that's bullshit. They stand
There.

Carlos turns around, saunters to
The jackpot, easily grabs the mane
Of the red horse of victory!

He comes back to where the flies
Are. The kid's eyes are fighting off
Real joy. That's alright. Carlos is
Beaming, hands him the score.

The kid pulls the balloons down
Around his head so his glee can't
Get past the helium and carefully
Walks away.

My heart used to skip for kids who
Had manners. Little automatons
Like I used to be.

Now I just wish for them they find
A Carlos on every corner, in every
Coffee shop, at the end of every
Abandoned balloon want.

Jessica Houston

