

2002

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Corin Wesner

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Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Wesner, Corin (2002) "Sweet on My Lips," *Intersections*: Vol. 2002: No. 13, Article 7.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol2002/iss13/7>

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SWEET ON MY LIPS

Passage from a Travel Journal

Corin Wesner

Africa, the sound is sweet on my lips. The name is like a song, a kind word, warm and deep. It is quite something to learn from these people and see that they are so much like me. I went to church this morning. The building was a wood and tin shack, the seats a mixture of pews and wooden chairs. As I walked in I saw the raindrops of water fall from the ceiling and further dampen an already soaked carpet. The sound of the wind hitting the walls of the church, the way the ceiling creaked and the wood bent as if it were going to crack made me shiver as much as the cold inside did.

I remember a Sunday only months ago when I entered my home church. The look of the new walls, painted, the carpet fresh. Everything so warm and beautiful. My mind goes back to the conditions at hand and I wonder what I will see at this church...this tin shack with an altar and borrowed pews. I wonder how I will last the cold three hours that lie ahead. People start to arrive and I am conscious of their dress in comparison with my carefree ensemble. I am reminded of my childhood, an argument I had with my mother in early adolescence. She wants me to wear a dress but I tell her God doesn't care if I wear a dress. I think of these women in their tin shacks as they pull out their best for worship. If only they had as many choices as I did.

The service is in Xhosa...I wonder how I will know what is going on. As the voices of the few who have come to sing fill the church I am engulfed in warmth. I see a life greater than any I have ever seen before. I am again taken back to my childhood. I stand in the church, singing. I am engulfed by the music, but I am not a part of it like these women are here in Africa. Their voices are like a perfect day. I am reminded of my love for people and the need for music, joy, beauty in my life.

As I stand, not sure of how to participate, I catch someone's eye. We smile. I know I have been welcomed, so I try to listen, be there, and I am opened up. The wind howls outside, it is wet and cold inside, but I am more safe and warmed than ever before.

I have a lot to learn from this place.

Corin Wesner is a junior at Capital Univeristy, majoring in Art Therapy and Religion.

