



A Natural Man

Gary Soto

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In this new collection of poetry, National Book Award finalist Gary Soto tackles the shabby reality of the world around him and turns it into vivid poetry. Drawing on the Chicano slang of the barrio, Soto gives authentic voice to portraits of life set mostly in California's San Joaquin Valley, where he was born and raised. The theme of the poet as troubadour runs throughout the book there is a wry humor in Soto's description of the drunken narrator of "The Mariachi Suit," who, with "spurs jangling music" and a "guitar like a small coffin in my arms," serenades an audience of cats, "Who yawn, lick the clover pads/Of their salty paws, and prance away." A delightful poem to Soto's wife of 23 years ("Meat and Potatoes") playfully contrasts a miserable bachelor meal with the exotic cooking of the woman next door: "Love was at her table,/A fork going to her mouth and the noodles,/How delicious, easy to swallow." These new poems will please Soto's many admirers, and the edgy voice of *A Natural Man* is sure to convert even more.

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