

Oklahoma r e v i e w

Volume 7 | Issue 1 | Spring 2006

When He Knocks

by Taylor Collier

The neighbors all warned you
though you didn't really believe,
chalked it up to gossip,
until you saw him yourself

on the sex-offender list—his name
bold-faced on the page, his crimes
in print, no longer whispers
in kitchens over cups of tea.

You were always polite, always
waved back, but now you
force smiles, so he won't know
you know.

What do you say to him,
your neighbor
who molested his own sons,
when he knocks on your door

and asks to borrow
a cup of sugar? If you let him,
will he come back? Will he
walk over to you

at the yearly block-party or at church
and try to strike up conversation,
leaving others wondering,
whispering about you? You lie,

tell him no, you're out of sugar too.
He trudges across the yard, back
to his truck and leaves
(for the grocery store).

That night you're locking up
the house before bed, as you've grown
accustomed to doing, and you see
a fresh bag of sugar on your doorstep.

Copyright © 2006 The Oklahoma Review