

How to catch the holy while humming along to “Santa Lucia” (Jack Jezzro, Guitar Romance)

by [Joyce H. Munro](#) in the [March 1, 2017](#) issue

*After a phone call with Brian Doyle*

Hello, this is Brian Doyle. Got your message and thought I'd call instead of e-mailing. I can't believe you were planning to come all the way to Chicago just for my workshop. Sorry you couldn't get there. . . . Wow, that's pretty radical surgery. Sounds like you've been through some bad stuff. Careful not to sneeze. Well, I assure you I didn't say anything worth traveling that far for. Nothing earth rattling. But if you like I can send you two pieces I used for handouts. Just so you know they're not how-tos. They're stories. A bit shy on the surface, then they get bolder, wiser on the inside. . . . I sort of sidle up to the who, what, when, where. Sneak in and try to catch hold of something holy, good, graceful. . . . I hope this doesn't sound glib—I start by putting my fingers on the keys and typing. Haaah, this'll sound even glibber. I never take time to parse words. One sentence just tucks into the next. Now you know why I have a hard time with how-tos, recipes. Step one, step two, mix, bake, serve while hot. I think you'll see what I mean in the handouts. One of them is kinda silly but the other is crucial. Dawn and Mary. . . . So tell me who you are and why you write and have you gotten to where you can hum while you write?