

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Kelley Jean White

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They float on sheer survival, running, one arm on the sill
of the moving trolley's window, then legs tossed up
and through—riding free, climbing
in the back, another arm down for another boy, the big loose
sneakers, white laces dangling toward the iron wheels, and sparks,
sparks parting their grinning hair, one foot caught
a moment on the cobblestones, muffled laughter. I imagine
the one who slaps his leg with such languid grace
falling, somehow falling forward into the great wheels' steady
grind—I do not want to see it, yet I am seeing it, it has not
happened, yet I am seeing it—I do not want to imagine that one missing
the leap, falling, head thrown against paving stone, or hand
slipping from another boy's hands, oh, Lord, mercy, they are all grace,
they are all speed and happy cheating, I am the one afraid.

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Basic Math

Sheena and Treena are twins born at 28 weeks gestation. How much will diapers and formula cost the month after they leave the ICU?

Rosalie receives 1135.00 a month in social security benefits. Her daughter's three children live with her. Her rent is \$850.00 a month. What did she spend on baby food last year?

Shannon is considering the Marine Corp. What rent should his parents ask for his room?

White bread is \$2.28 at ACME. How old are the six loaves on the shelves at U&S nuisance store? How many actual food items does the store sell? How much did U&S take in in total sales (unspecified) last month?

Tyrone will work two jobs this summer. What is the probability that he will graduate from high school?

Take the sum of these numbers and divide into Congress's yearly salary. Multiply by the budget for the Iraq War. Empty your pockets.

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Contained

Into the box I fold my father's merit badge sash, brown, each patch hand
 sewn in red thread, the eagle medal pinned with care;
I tuck in a picture of my mother, nineteen, sunbathing on a rock, arms elbows out
 behind her head, pin-up perfect,
I slide in the card-bound journal my father kept at sixteen--at sea, at sea,
 20 men killed, at sea. It fits exactly against the back of the box;
I place another curled picture against the side: my father stands behind my
mother,
 holding her arms outstretched as they both bow:
 "engaged and happy," 1948.
His slide rule slips ivory smooth from its case, cool in my hand as I lay it
 in the bottom of the box with money clip, trout patch, model sailboat,
 IBM forty years service watch.
I unfold a brittle column of newsprint, Laconia Evening Citizen, 1956,
 "Bob White played like a firecracker," in the men's racket league,
 repeat its intricate folds, secure it inside.
Next the red spiral notebook, fishing trips, 1986 to 1996, "water temp 43-45.
 rises all over, 12 caught, 2 kept, laid in with, then navy tags,
St. Christopher medal, scapular, and weighted down last with
 the knife, dark bone handled, magic, heavy, hard,
 found alone in the bottom left hand pocket of the fishing vest--
 it is the last thing, I cannot let go without crying,
 as the lid fits precisely, closed.