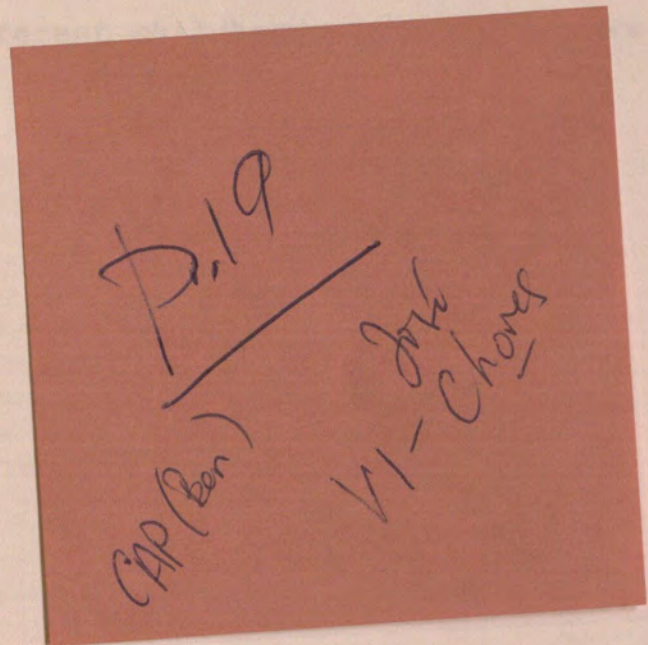


LIFELIST (6/27)

Childhood

Upper Dogwood:

the morning of dawn & flowers
Flexible Flyer
First Communion
Rita Kimmie
getting "lost"
the tree climbing tree
golf course
Mimi
Sundays
Annie
Chrissy Downey
the flowered rug
dress up
dancing
Mr Downey his flag
Mrs Downey cookies
Neddie
Anne Flynn (Downey's nurse?)
feeding the ducks
winter
Maroneys
Mac
fish market
meat market
Tony's garage
Mimi & the ride to school
Pappy
Dad the doctor
Mom's perfume
our wing
Peg and the dexedrine
Resurrection Sister Syra my stealing
Sacred Heart
Mrs. (Riverside Drive) her hat
Madame Palfy
Mother Atkinson Junior School
Manursing Apawamis
Southampton the moving of the household
bikes
Purchase Street
"Hoppy"
Ivy the dog
Dad's fires
the square house
my room: birds (also downstairs) Mr. Sheridan & Sargent
Floppy
my first poem about the stuffed donkey (there is a XX that sits on my
shelf/his head is much bigger than the rest of himself) it was
published (albeit edited)



Margaret
other "nannies"
Basil's cut leg
Mrs. Bulkley
Annie & my fights
Margot's visits from college
(Southampton as a teenager)
Megan, Rick & Laurie
Dick & Charlotte's modern house
still Chrissy (I think)
Mimi & the French lessons in the car
Dad's office WO7 0976 seeing our feet in the fluoroscope
the fire
Dogwood Lane: Mimi's house
My last, best room
the winter night of snow
Zoo Time
Annie & Bas & Peg and I had such different childhoods from the others
Sacred Heart friends
teenage: the secret life I led
meeting Bill
Georgetown
Dorrance
Nick Kilmer
city/international life
Eva & Lucie
the Cincinnati crew
CISV
abortion
wedding
New Haven
Chapel Hill
Aurora
Ithaca
Portsmouth
Barnstead
Portsmouth
Barrington

arrangements for the lot to be shipped home, anything could be sent back, picked up by a store courier. No decision was final, no choice irrevocable. And often, oddly, Dad was the final arbiter. He had few opinions on fashion, but when he expressed a negative one, Mom would promptly return the offending item.

When Annie began to complain of leg aches and I got grouchy, Mom relented. Our reward for all the tryings-on was lunch at Schrafft's with Grandma: club sandwiches on white toast cut into thick triangles. For dessert, silver bowls filled with circles of vanilla-flecked ice cream topped with a hot butterscotch sauce that hardened to a brittle, honey-colored crust.

Grandma & Grandpa were my New York City. The five storied mansion on Park Avenue was all its buildings, St. Patrick's cathedral its churches. *Regent Seven Oh Six Eight Seven*. Her phone number was my connection to the stories my mother told us, as real, as present as any of the books she read to us outloud at bedtime.

(HERE I NEED TO FLASH BACK TO MOM'S CHILDHOOD, THEN ANNIE'S AND MY GLIMPSE OF WHAT WAS LEFT. MY INFATUATION WITH MARGO, ETC.)

(new chapter?)

(transition) Mom and I rode the train to New York in strained silence. Grandma met us at the seamstress for the fitting. The three of them tucked the slippery fabric and wax orange blossoms around my thin, stiff body. I was acutely aware that my mother was aware of my abdomen, flat though it was. Afterwards, we went to Bachrach with the dress and the veil and I was photographed. Then Schrafft's.

On the crowded train ride home, Mom fell asleep as usual, her head resting politely on the pinstriped shoulder of a businessman who, equally polite, continued with his evening paper.

On my wedding morning, delivered to the church in a limousine, I paused outside the church doors, moments away from the relatives and expectant guests, the bridesmaids and ushers and the groom. Marina ran up the stone stairs and pressed something into my hand. It was a gold signet ring that I'd sold, along with my mother's charm bracelet, to pay for the abortion.

Bill had come with me for the appointment. It was early morning and the doctor's waiting room was crowded with people who were sick. A woman rocked her cranky child. A young man with a bruise on his cheek and his arm in a sling stared at the wall. An old man opposite me read a magazine. There were more women with children, more young men with wounds. Bill was reading. Name after name was called. Never mine. I was wearing the same red and white striped wash and wear dress I'd worn that night in Paris. No one noticed me. I didn't dare speak up for fear of being told to leave. There was no choice but to continue waiting.

For three weeks after I'd tracked down a New York physician who would perform an abortion, I lived on black tea and the samples I'd collected from the little cards sent to my father by drug companies. Orange Dexadrine pills. Dexamil capsules filled with tiny green and white pellets. For three weeks I whispered feverishly to Diane and Mady on the telephone late at night, devising ways to raise the money.

I was a freshman at Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Washington. Marina was in Washington too, studying nursing. She was one of my contributors, and she knew about the jewelry.

Light left the window in the waiting room and the skyscrapers on the upper West Side had begun to glimmer when I was called into the office.

The doctor--I still remember his name--was sitting behind a dark desk decorated with framed color photographs of his children. In a weary voice he asked me if I was sure I wanted to do what I was doing. Yes. And I began to cry with fatigue and relief. I pushed five one hundred dollar bills across the desk. He took me to a small room and told me to wait. *Wait!* I couldn't stop crying and then, somehow, I was out in the hall by the elevator, crying still, and an urgent voice at my ear: *Is it over? Is it over? Let's get out of here!* But it wasn't over. No. *Why are we leaving?* And the doctor again, nervous now, angry. *Where are you staying? What room? I'll be there in the morning. Be alone. Now get out of here, both of you.*

He came, carrying a black house call bag just like my father's. He was a small man, formally dressed. There were some preparations. A shot. I helped him move two heavy, scratchy hotel armchairs to the foot of the bed so he could position my legs, heavy now, over them. This, I realized years later, was my first gynecological experience. I remember talking too much. I remember looking through my splayed knees out the window into a window across the street where a woman sat sewing. I remember a pounding on the door. I'd ordered a sandwich, I tried to explain.

Just let me tell him I'm not hungry anymore.

Do not speak!

More pounding and then the sandwich went away.

I don't recall pain, just time passing between my legs. I don't recall fear. Sometime later the doctor was washing his hands in the bathroom. He stood by the bed and gave me a handful of pills--antibiotics, he said--to take for a week, and he disappeared.

A real doctor. Yes, a real doctor. I know your name. I will never tell. I can sleep now. I could eat a sandwich.

But the phone is ringing, ringing.

Is it over?

Yes, it's over, I say, and I say please bring me a box of Kotex and he does and he tells me how embarrassed he'd been to buy it and I felt bad for him.

There's a little church near the hotel where Franciscan friars feed the hungry and hear confessions. It's so like that church in Port Chester where we went to weekday Mass sometimes in Lent. No one knew us there. No one knows me here. Tomorrow I will feel well enough to tell Father. That's all I need to do.

Marina had bought it back, the gold ring with my initials. I could have turned then, gathered the handworked Irish lace veil over one gloved arm and walked, elegant in my mother's cream satin wedding dress, back down the shallow stone steps and into the life I'd imagined. Instead, I took my father's elbow.

Annie preceeded me down the aisle, my maid-of-honor, summoned from university in Toronto before term's end. I hadn't told her the truth. It would be some years before we'd begin the relationship that has

sustained me through my strange adventures into the wilds of family.

In the photos, flanked by boys in tuxedos and coiffed young women in satin pumps dyed to match dresses they would never wear again, I look beautiful and happy. Annie had fixed my hair.

(THE NEXT SEGMENT NEEDS TO BE THE STORY OF ME AND ANNIE...NEVER MIND THE OTHER SIBLINGS, WHO WERE, FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, MERE INTERLOPERS.)

3. Why do I live in New Hampshire Now.

becus i got on T.V. with Jack Wellams
and we went sailing in BowSt ten and
thos how i got put on T.V. with Jack Wellams
andi aske for a MOM and Dad becus i didnot
have a Mom and Dad in Mass. becus they
ran away from me thay w. and i like
the animals in the forrest a lot and
i like to fish in the river a lot.

4. I have a big family with grandparents &
brothers & cousins & aunts & auncles. Some of
them are:

- Grandma & grandpa in Vermont
- Silas & Cornie in Maine (grandparents)
- Kirsten - Cousin
- Julian - Cousin
- Jose - brother brother
- Bill Matthews brother
- Sebastian "
- Basil - cousin
- Jess - Cousin
- Mary - aunt
- Basil - uncle
- Louise - Portsmouth (grand mother)

p. 6

3/1/87

1. Where was I born? What is it like there?
I was born in Puerto Rico, it has palm trees
all over the place, and it was sun and the
beaches where ^{people} and the water was warm
and it had a lot of birds on the beaches
and trees, and it had palm trees around the
beaches and sand, and I ^{saw} a ^{whale} in the
water when I was on the beach, and
there were ~~pelicans~~ ^{pelicans} flying all over the
trees and diving for fishes to eat because
they were hungry because they did not have food
at all.

2. Where did I grow up when I was little?

I grew up in Massachusetts. When I
was a little boy in Mass. because my and
my ~~father~~ ^{father} parents got me so mad and they
hit me, because I was getting into trouble with
my brothers because I did get along with either
of them because we got into trouble a lot at
home and my Dad and Mom put me
in restriction most of the day.

2 I lived in several different houses.

One of the houses I lived in was a
^{apartment} ~~parent~~ ^{parent} building, and several smaller houses.
and a ~~father~~ ^{father} ~~care~~ home.

Others (pg 21 to 31)

cliché
gossip
feelings
"I" messages
feedback
peer relationships
peer pressure
group relationships
self-love
self-centeredness

Stress (pg 37 to 44)

stress
eustress
distress
immune system
stress management
problem-solving approach (7 steps)
diet
neurosis
psychosis

Drugs (pg 193-203)

Peer pressure

Reasons to use alcohol

Why people do not use alcohol

alcoholism

alcoholic

Smokeless tobacco

Non-smokers rights

mainstream smoke

sidestream smoke

Chemical Substances (pg 209-219)

Helpful drugs

aspirin

novocaine

immunization

Drugs affect you

stimulants

depressants

addiction

withdrawal sickness

Kinds of drugs
tranquillizers
depressants
hallucinogens

Over the counter
Prescription

and whatever else!
In haste P.

fix accent marks. José
café

1/14

Intro - "Carol"

- 1 - New Haven - Post
- 2 Posts - SPF
- 3 SPF - Louisa - B & B - Bill's talk. WBZ
- 4 Maria - Manny arriving.
- 5 School - Barrington
- 6 Early Manny - José - "8th gr." grad.
- 7 SJHS - Ski
- 8 Mish-mash Stories
- 9 HS - baseball - driving - prom
- 10 - Runaway.
- 11 - Ham & home.

(April 19)

Maria Edwards brought José along on one of her visits in the early spring of 1985. Manny and José Cabrera had been separated for most of their lives, tossed in a hopper of foster homes. From what Maria had been able to discover, the brothers had been a handful for the families who'd tried to keep both of them. In the end, José went to live as a foster child in a large family; Manny was not so lucky. His early years were spent first in a group home, then in a succession of temporary placements.

"José would call me," Maria told us, "and ask to see his brother. You wouldn't believe how complicated it was to arrange such a small thing...different social workers, different schedules and rules. But José insisted on keeping track of Manny. So I'd manage to get them together once in a while. We'd usually go to Forest Park."

Forest Park: a small oasis of green and quiet in a city where Blacks and Hispanics and Anglos staked out their turf along lines as clearly demarcated as the streets. I could imagine Manny and José being little boys together in that park, fishing, running in the woods. Bless Maria for realizing how important that was for them.

"Come on out, José. This is where Manny lives." Maria's passenger seemed cautious. He opened the car door.

"Hi, José." Manny was grinning. He turned to us. "This is my younger brother."

"Hello." José shook my hand, then Charter's. His eyes darted from us to our house to the trees. Somehow the look on his face made the oaks and pines loom larger. This ain't no park, he seemed to be thinking. They really live here?

We all just stood there for a moment. "Manny, why don't you show José your room?" Charter broke the silence. They mounted the steps ahead of us, Manny in his work boots and jean jacket, José tentative in his city shoes.

He was a small, slim figure next to Manny, not at all similar in appearance. Manny's hair was tightly curled; José wore his straight black hair combed back and long. Manny's features were bold; José's delicate, chiseled. Manny's skin was the color of mahogany next to his brother's the paler tan.

"Would you guys like a sandwich?" I asked.

"Please," replied Manny.

"I don't care," said José, which I took to mean yes.

I set out a plate of ham and tuna sandwiches, a pitcher of cider and a bowl of chips.

Afterwards, Manny went off with José to the pond while we sat with Maria drinking tea and talking.

"You know José has refused to be adopted by the Leons," she told us. "They have offered many times, but he says he'd never be their real son no matter what. He's a funny kid."

As for Manny, Maria thought we'd probably be able to adopt him officially by September.

After another hour of conversation, Maria began gathering her things. The boys had returned and were taking off damp shoes. I said to Maria, "Charter and I wondered if José could spend the night. We could drive him to Boston tomorrow and put him on the Springfield bus."

"Oh how nice! José, would you like to?" she smiled at him

encouragingly. He didn't answer at first.

I was puzzled by this boy. At lunch he'd opened up a bit, asking questions, commenting on the things that had caught his eye. The cookstove. The rough tree that served as the room's center post. Charter's drawing board and worktable with its litter of markers and tapes. The shotgun on the beam. He spoke quickly and intensely as if gathering necessary information. He didn't smile, though, and I couldn't tell how he was processing what he heard.

"I'd better call my parents." He had the look of having made a difficult choice. I gave him the phone. He spoke in rapid Spanish, punctuating his sentences with bursts of English. He sounded very adult and sure of himself.

Yet, after Maria had driven away and it was clear that he was definitely committed to his decision, José grew anxious. As evening approached, he kept glancing at our big windows. "What kind of animals are out there?"

Manny hovered around his brother, trying to reassure him. No, there were no bears, just deer and foxes. The gun? That was only for woodchucks sometimes. No, we didn't lock our doors. Nothing to worry about.

José picked at his dinner and only half watched a couple of TV shows. I wonder if he slept at all that night, lying under the skylight listening for bears.

He came down in the morning looking haggard. He accepted a cup of coffee but nothing else. No amount of cheery patter could lighten his mood, and, despite Manny's suggestions of things to do, José remained sitting in a chair at the table until it was time for Charter to take him to Boston.

It was with relief that I walked him to the car, but Manny seemed genuinely disappointed to see him go. "Come up and stay here again," he said.

And José turned to him, hands in his jacket pockets, thin shoulders shrugged against the cold wind.

"You know," he said to Manny. "You don't have to get adopted if you don't want to. Nobody can make you."

I felt suddenly very tired.

(transition)

The reality of our decision was beginning to sink in, like the damp chill of March. The more content Manny became with the shape of his days, the more I realized how much he was changing mine. Even though Manny was almost fifteen and becoming quite familiar with the workings of woodstoves, I didn't feel comfortable leaving him alone for long periods. My flexible weekday schedule was once again bounded by bus departures and arrivals, and our weekend nights had to include taking Manny to skating or picking him and his friends up at the movies.

Charter seemed unruffled as he worked Manny into his consciousness. On the occasional evening when I'd collapse into a swamp of ambivalence, start to recite my short litany of frustration, he would flick off the light over his drawing board, put aside his tools--Exacto knife, burnisher, markers, level--to comfort me. His fingers moved along the muscles in my neck and

shoulders as he talked me down.

"You're doing great." He smoothed out the knots. "Manny's so happy. And you're still writing wonderful poems. It's O.K." he laughed. He always laughed, finally, at the life we'd been dealt. "What else would we be doing anyhow?" It was true. The business was growing slowly and we needed to attend to it daily. It kept us close to home.

"Manny's just a new member of the family. We can handle it. Imagine..." Charter's hands moved to my face, tilting it close to his.. "Imagine where that kid be tonight instead..."

Friends used to ask me how I put up with an outhouse. Those same friends asked each other--I know--why another child?

"I'm in love." But more, I trusted Charter's instincts and trusted the care he took of me.

Not only was I tossed back into the orbit of the public school, this time it involved guidance counselors and reading specialists, psychologists and school boards.

Seventh grade at Barrington Middle School was clearly insufficient to Manny's needs. Our town was not wealthy, and the schools were not able adequately to shoulder crushing costs of special education. Kids with learning disabilities, kids with emotional problems, physically handicapped children all shared two windowless rooms in which beleaguered teachers attempted to cope with their various situations.

Besides these special classes in reading and math, Manny was mainstreamed into regular classrooms. He loved art and the art teacher, Bobbie Slavin, appreciated his talent. Though science was difficult, he labored mightily to please his favorite teacher, Bruce Bacon. He seemed to get on with the other kids, but his closest friends remained his neighbors, Josh and Wes.

There was no indication that another year in Barrington would advance Manny's academic progress; there was no program geared to his kind of problems; and he was already older than the eighth graders.

I spent hours on the phone with school officials in various departments trying to devise a solution that would provide Manny with a school environment in which, finally, he could grow.

The Dover school--where Barrington sent most of its students for junior high and high school--was singularly unhelpful, as though these kids from the woods were afterthoughts in the system. If there was room, I was led to believe in a conversation with a Dover High bureaucrat, Manny might be admitted to Special Ed classes. He'd certainly have very little chance to participate in school sports. "We have a very competitive athletic program." And I wasn't able to discover if he could even be guaranteed art classes.

I turned to Spaulding Junior High, a school in the old mill town of Rochester, eight miles away. This time it was not some harried and impatient administrator who responded.

On the first day of spring break, Paul Asbell, principal of Spaulding JHS, arrived at the Middle School to meet with us. He wore gray slacks and a striped tie, though this should have been his first morning in jeans and a flannel shirt. Once again, we found ourselves arranged in a circle in those fiendish desk-chairs, trying

to get comfortable, shifting in our seats like kids just before the last bell.

Paul had brought along the papers I'd sent him on Manny. He listened carefully to our concerns, breaking in now and then to ask us a question or clarify a point with the Middle School staff. He seemed interested, excited almost. At last Manny was being seen not as a problem but a challenge.

"Manny's needs are very familiar to us at Spaulding. He's by no means alone in requiring a special program. We're set up for kids like him. We have an excellent team of teachers who have a great deal of experience in these areas." Paul made it appear perfectly simple. Seventh grader Manny Weeks should enroll in Spaulding's ninth grade in the fall.

I love people like Maria Edwards and Paul Asbell. There are a few of them, in the carpeted offices of corporations, the corridors of state government, the fluorescent rooms of agencies and public schools, whose individual imaginations burn like charcoal, with an even and steady heat. They have a way of making things happen despite the inertia of institutions.

Despite the fact that Asbell's obvious conclusion would require of us another round of phone calls and letters to boards and supervisors, that there would be any number of officials eager to dismiss this course of action as unprecedented and therefore impossible, Charter and I left the meeting jubilant.

The remainder of the school year passed peacefully and Manny, much to the surprise of his classmates-for-a-day, took his place in line at the gym on a warm evening in June and received his first diploma. Wim and Jonell, proud grandparents, took his picture. We wore the checked blazer Jonell had loaned him for the occasion and a tie of Charter's that didn't quite match.

Summer: 1985

the start of our new bedroom/B&B helping (where are they over the summer & into the fall?) /)Bash takes that bus trip to Claremont via Anne Mairs after Xmas/)

the frog incident

did Manny go to 4H? Did CW & I go to Quebec City? yes (Look at journal, esp. letters to Annie)

June 24, 1985

Dear Annie:

At last we've started the new bedroom. Charter has designed a space off the downstairs closet just large enough for a bed and some built-in drawers. The way the house is sited, with those enormous

rocks on the north side and the drop-off, it's our only choice. It'll sit on cement piers (Manny's digging the holes, bless him. Thank God for teenagers with strong backs) and when it's done, it'll look as if it had always been here. Charter's architectural sense is really amazing considering he has had zero training. And each addition gets a little classier!

Bill and Sebastian are here for the summer again. I love it. They're both living in Portsmouth and we all hang out together a lot. Weekends Charter presses them into service banging nails and working in the garden.

Did I ever tell you the story about Bill and the garden? He was about 16 and coming to blows with Charter over practically everything, especially weeding. Needless to say, neither he nor his brother took the kind of pleasure Charter did in rescuing baby carrot plants and spindly tomatoes from the witchgrass. But, despite all the sparring, they were becoming real friends. Anyhow, one day Bill burst into the house. "Charter, guess what I found in Rochester?" He was beaming. "Right on the corner of South Main Street there's this huge building. You go in and--this is amazing--along three walls there are big bins of beets and lettuce and radishes and onions...every vegetable you can imagine...all picked! You just fill up your cart with whatever you want!"

Annie, am I terrible to compare Manny's slow, often uncomprehending self to my other two boys? Will there come a time when Manny will be fun? Does it matter?

It's obvious, though, that Bill and Bash spark their new brother. When Bill's around, Manny makes the most extraordinary watercolors. You know, if all the art he produced resulted from school classes, you'd never know what a gift he has. He happily completes assignments that end up looking tortured and unimaginative. But when he paints with Bill--the two of them chatting and listening to reggae--his brush creates still lifes worthy of Monet (Manny's favorite painter). I'll send you the next one he does. You won't believe it.

Bill takes him to Friendly's for shakes and he shoots baskets in the yard with Bash. Well, I've sensed it for years, ever since my divorce: in the long run, sibling relationships are the ones that really count. Do you think I could hire B & B to stay here as professional brothers?

Charter and I are going on our first vacation since Manny arrived. We'll spend a week in Qu⁺béc City while Manny goes to 4-H camp. I can't wait.

Thanks for your long letter. When will we see each other?

Love to George and the kids. Tell Julian The Godmother is beginning to shop for his birthday.

(Manny's relationship with the Cappiellos)

Though Manny had served as a kind of older brother to Nick Cappiello, tossing endless footballs and baseballs with him, watching mind-numbing hours of Saturday afternoon sports, riding bikes and fishing off the dock, it was Ben's birth in 1986 that sparked Manny's closer relationship with the Cappiello family.

Dan and Joyce's small house was hand built by one of the

Community's first members in the lee of a huge rock outcropping. It was comfortable for the two of them as Dan set up his law practice and Joyce finished her schooling to become a nurse practitioner. When Nicolas was born, he occupied the spare room. Then Lena displaced him. Dan and Joyce built a new bedroom for themselves and the kids grew into the spaces they left.

Ben's arrival added one more layer of shirts, socks, toys, books and wheeled conveyances to a home that Nick and Lena had already littered with baseball gloves, violins, sneakers, rubber rafts, Barbie dolls, board games, battery-operated robots, coloring books, nerf balls, posters, stuffed animals, snow boots, sleds, training wheels and mittens.

It always seemed to me, when Joyce would clear a space for our mugs of tea among the newspapers, envelopes and math worksheets on the diningroom table, that every item belonging to the family was, at any given moment, lost.

Joyce and I began our relationship soon after I came to live in the Community. It had been one of the original decisions of the founders of Scruton Pond Farm that no dwelling would be built in sight of another. As a result, while we were all within walking distance by dirt roads or paths through the woods, our immediate surroundings offered the illusion of sylvan isolation. But when it was necessary to borrow enough potatoes to complete a recipe or when we needed an extra body to help move a freezer or fell a tree, our neighbors were nearby and, in an unspoken covenant, always willing to help.

Our proximity also encouraged informal comings together. For instance, Joyce's diningroom, table pushed back and rug rolled up, made a convenient studio for Jennifer's twice-weekly dance class. In the familiar manner of women gathered around a task, our class afforded exercise for both body and spirit. While we danced and sweated-- Jennifer, Cherry, Donna, Ann and I--we talked about our quotidian lives. We grew to know one another.

Joyce never actually admitted that the appearance of a third child presented an insurmountable problem; she was possessed of a serene temperament that bordered on fatalistic. Still it was clear that, between her husband's rigid schedule and the demands of her own work, she needed help.

Enter Manny Weeks.

What had he already learned?

That an outhouse needs a shovel of wood ash now and then. That the kitchen stove will smoke if the flue isn't open. That adjectives go with nouns and the phone must be answered 'Isinglass Studio' between the hours of 9 and 5. He could split maple and oak. He knew how to do a laundry and hang it out. How to make French fries. He could accompany us to an art opening and voice his opinion about what was hanging on the walls. He had stopped saying 'ain't' and he used words like 'appropriate' in ordinary sentences. He could tell time, multiply two digit figures, make a luminous watercolor from a pot of cut lilies on the table, tell the difference between a Van Gogh and a Monet, separate the garbage into glass and cans, paper and compost.

Then Joyce introduced Manny to a world I never wanted to experience again: infancy. She needed him and he loved to be

needed. She taught him to change a diaper, warm a bottle, dress him or get him ready for bed. Ben adored him.

You could see it. I'd drop over on a Sunday to borrow the Globe TV section. Dan was usually reclining in front of a Red Sox game. Lena might be working on a macaroni collage. Nick, restless, would be waiting for Manny to pitch on the lawn. And Ben, still in his one-piece pajama, would be poised at the head of the stairs, ready to fling his little trusting body into the open arms of

"Maaaaaannnnneee!"

At first, if Dan and Joyce wanted Manny for a Saturday night, Charter and I stayed home. If we had plans, Jonell would stop in. What if there were a kitchen fire? What if Nick and Lena started a fight that Manny couldn't handle? Supposing Ben began to choke? The Cappiello decision to make Manny Weeks their babysitter involved the neighborhood.

But gradually it became evident that the arrangement was working. There were no crises. Manny was able to manage his position as Ben's nanny while maintaining his fraternal relationship with Nick.

He made himself at home at the Cappiello's, becoming as familiar with their domestic routines as he was with ours. He often chided the older kids about the state of their rooms, washed up a sinkfull of dishes unasked or helped with the chickens.

Dan and Joyce accommodated those moments when Manny's notion of family extended beyond their own.

"I had to ask him," Joyce told me one morning, "not to leave notes for us on letters we've put out to mail. But, "she responded to my worried question about Manny's wandering into their empty house, "it's OK that he feels free to come in. That's fine." Her patience was boundless. "Dan does get a little ruffled periodically."

"What do you mean?"

She laughed. "It's nothing, really. Now and then Manny pops up unexpectedly. For instance, the other morning Dan came out of the bathroom to discover Manny in his bedroom."

On balance, it all must have been worth it.

Sometime during that period I accepted an invitation to judge a literary competition in Pennsylvania. One of my fellow judges was a black poet from the Midwest. We had dinner together and exchanged stories. I told her all about Manny and I must have said something about his child care skills.

Suddenly she became serious, almost angry. "Never," she said, in a quiet voice that chilled me, "allow your son to take a job dealing with young children. Remember, "she leaned toward me, "the outside sees him first as a young man with a disability. If any issue should come up about abuse, any accusation at all, he'd be defenseless."

The pleasure drained from my evening. I thought about Manny reading Ben his bedtime story, his index finger moving carefully over the printed words. The time would come when Ben would be able to read on his own, and inevitably the time when he would read much better than Manny. Goodnight. Moon.

The singular twilight din of spring peepers had given way to the velvet crush of early summer sounds. Honey bees gossiped in quince blossoms like teenagers at a prom. Phoebes worried the eaves and overhangs, started nests that would soon erupt in dawn cacophonies outside our bedroom window. The swamp maples reddened and slowed the wind to a sigh. Golden-eyed frogs had returned to the little fish pond in Charter's Japanese garden where they belched contentedly among the stones and sprouting arrow weed.

We walked back home from a Sunday morning visit, through transparent veils of mayflies, past sudden bursts of painted trillium, inhaling the admixture of damp leaves and pine pitch peculiar to that time of year, listening to jays and towhees competing for airtime. We heard the laughter of children and went toward the sound.

As we approached, we could separate the skein of voices into the individual threads of Manny, little Ben and Jason. Their happy shouts had a rhythm, like cheers.

Smiling, full of the kind of romantic flush that June encourages, we encountered the happy boys...

...just as the frog completed its splayed arc and was hurtling downward, like a circus acrobat who'd missed the bar, into the shimmering algae net of the fish pond.

Manny retrieved the twitching creature and, to the delight of his pre-school audience, lofted it back into the sky.

I was a frozen spectator unable to comprehend the terrible reality of what was playing itself out before me. It was Charter who turned, strode to the shed, brought out the long-handled spade and handed it to Manny.

"Kill it."

Now and then the awesome reality of what we'd done disturbed but still the summer (unfolded) as it always had (the boys, etc.) and moved into September, etc.

(1985 moments up to SJHS)

first attempt to quit smoking (Feb)

BAND/VFP

voiceovers / AIS / Barrington Library Trustee / Police Committee

Bill makes image of watchbaby

clients: Jan/Lydall/Alan Wilson/Lydall newsletter/Hampshire/OASIS

May 19 Currier show...biker

Bash arrives

Kay Whidden tutoring

July 1-13 4-H

Bill arrives



PRIDE
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(à la Sue Grafton)

take the opportunity - when bringing the reader to a place in the plot - to first the reader in on locale.

eg. Joyce's house (or Jay & Arthea's) as a jumping off place for a description of the community.

- 47B to open into the larger Dover
- Ann & Busk's Writs to describe Portsmouth
- Guy Hayward " " "

other locales that figure in the story:

Fernie
Manchester

Voyageur re Barrington (way to describe our woods, etc.)
(imagined)

el where CW & I went for 2 wks. every summer when Madam was at camp, etc. (CW & I alone)



PRIDE
PRINTERS INC.

Re: telescoping events of people around subjects

Art

Manny's school classes vs his sessions with
Bill —

Winn Frank

CW's design work

The habit of reading & looking (Matisse, etc.)

Manny's style Bill's style (Yanoff)

Arthea's drawings

Vinas presents

house

Illness

not given much weight in our home

house

Bark's wisdom teeth

Mom

Dad

My cyst operation

CW's back



PRIDE
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Sports - Manny - skiing, skating vs. team
fishing
b'ball
soccer
baseball

A way to relate:

Dan
Bill & Bash

<The equipment>

School

after the prelims - Barnington
SJHS - Priscilla
SHS - Gail

Prism
Grad

The experience

flashbacks to East Hill
Little Harbor
Barnstead

Bill & Bash in Iowa, Colorado, Seattle
Pitzer

The Convent
Moses Brown.



PRIDE
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learned how
internalized when

The question of morality
ethics

W3 à vis

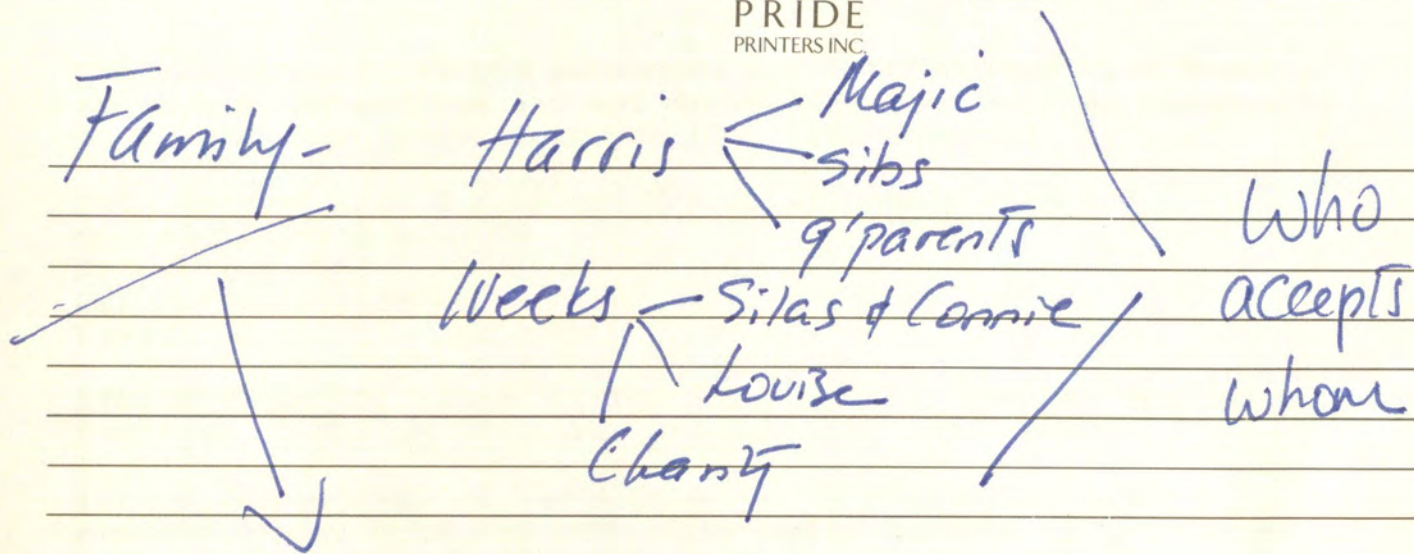
Childhood deceptions & lies
patterns

internalizing morality

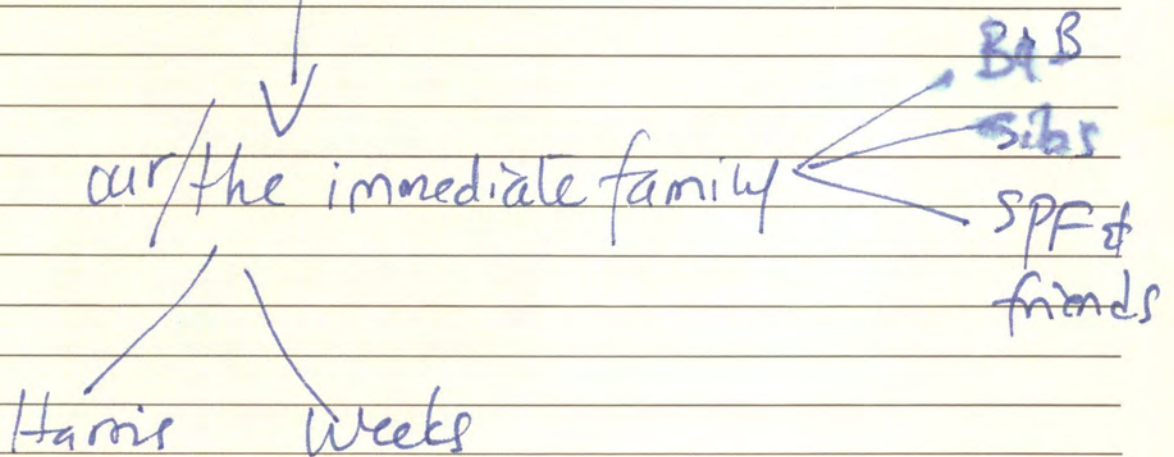
Manny - little thief (Chapter Title:
from toys at Wilsons Little Thief)
to the 23 year old
taking change from bureaus.



PRIDE
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Holidays. me & CW



The Xmas trees

presents who buys
who for

87-88
88-89
89-90

Spaulding HS

The school years should be summed up, interspersed with Manny's non-school adventures and our daily lives, as well as flashbacks to school experiences long ago (Me, B&B, Charter)

This chapter should fill out M's relationship with SPF
My relationship with CW
My writing life
Our business life
Traveling

(The High School years: girls, male friends, sports, special teachers, learning to drive, growing into independence)

(There follow some of the pieces--in no particular order--needing transitions and more about other aspects of Charter and my other concerns: family illnesses and deaths, our careers, our relationship)

...
*Forget the coaches shouting back
about the way the game is played
and consider the game
they're already playing, or playing
perhaps elsewhere on some other field,*

Wesley McNair

From his first days on the Barrington Middle School's basketball squad, through ten days of summer soccer camp on the grounds of an exclusive private school, to stints in the local Little League and his years playing wing for Spaulding Junior High and High School, Manny never got the hang of team sports. Like his Canadian cousin Julian who had been known to stop in the middle of a hockey match to retrieve a referee's dropped pen, Manny was not fired with the spirit of competition.

But Manny could run. As a basketball player, he dashed back and forth at the edges of the court, cheering enthusiastically whenever anyone, on either side, made two points. At soccer

practice, we'd spot him immediately, the left wing loping gracefully just inside the sideline, shouting encouragement to his teammates as they passed the ball everywhere but in his direction. His grasp of baseball was keenest when he was at bat; but though he had a fine throwing arm, I never saw him field a ball in a game.

Manny looked terrific in uniform. Spaulding's red shorts and red and white shirt suited his lean body and long legs. One of my favorite photos shows him posed kneeling on a green field against a backdrop of flaming maples, a black and white soccer ball balanced on one bent leg. His curly hair is cropped close to his head and he is smiling like a winner.

Except when the coach exploded in the locker room after a particularly humiliating defeat, It didn't seem to matter to Manny if his team won or lost. He just liked to play, and he loved the cleats and shin pads, the numbered jerseys, the purple mimeographed sheets of instructions and diagrams.

Manny began his career in team sports when he came to New Hampshire. He brought to each endeavor his innate skills and he never improved beyond them. I sometimes think of those long-suffering math and science teachers who doubled as coaches on fall afternoons. They were given a lanky boy with tireless legs and a sweet disposition. But despite their time-proven training methods and heroic efforts, Manny Weeks would remain simply a handsome presence at the bottom left of the annual team photograph.

It's mid-June and Charter and I have come to the ballfield to watch Manny play. The parking lot is dotted with station wagons and pickup trucks. Parents sell cold drinks and steamed hot dogs from a handmade concession stand. Umpires and coaches arrive from their day jobs while Little Leaguers of all ages warm up on dusty diamonds surrounded by sagging snow fence.

The kids are wearing the logos of their local sponsors. George Calef's Fine Foods. Lenzi Construction. The Christmas Dove. Landry's Auto Salvage. Knight's Garage. Southeast Bank for Savings. Davis Concrete. Farina's Family Dental Care.

Our Babe Ruth team takes the field with much ball tossing and ass slapping. Manny jogs into deep left, turn and crouches, punches his fist rhythmically into his glove. He has it down: the stance, the determined squint, the flex of throwing arm, the pawing of one foot in the dirt.

Innings pass. Manny strikes out. Manny tosses his bat with the disgust of a seasoned player in a slump. Manny lets a pop fly drop. Manny watches a base hit become a homerun. Manny runs to the dugout. Manny returns to the outfield.

Bottom of the ninth. Manny turns and crouches, punches his glove. He looks exactly like a baseball card rookie from a village in Central America.

As the shortstop catches an infield fly, ending the losing game and releasing his teammates into a rush for bicycles, Manny remains, frozen in his practiced posture.

Our neighbor in the bleachers crumples his soda can and turns to Charter. "What do you suppose he's thinking?"

It was a gray, drizzly afternoon and at first I put Manny's low mood down to that, which, in retrospect was stupid. Though he commented on the weather as sagely as any breakfast regular at Phil's Diner, Manny's take on the world had nothing to do with climate. I asked him about his day and he responded with a quiet, "Fine," instead of his usual "Great."

Rather than retreating to his room as was his habit, he stayed at the table, flipping the pages of The New Yorker.

"So Manny, tell me about your day." I was still only half attending to him.

"That's OK," he replied, in a teenager's version of 'no

thanks.'

I pushed my notepad aside and looked at him. His shoulders were rounded. He was picking absently at his cuticles with one thumb.

I made a pot of tea and brought him a cup.

"Something bad happened."

"I didn't get in trouble."

"But something happened."

"No. Well, sort of."

"Want to tell me about it?"

"Not really." But he didn't leave. I sensed he might be waiting for me to push him further. Had this been Bill or Sebastian, I'd probably have let it alone, confident that they'd talk it over eventually if they needed to. But with Manny, who found it difficult enough to volunteer even the most innocuous information, I often pressed.

The radio was tuned to WGBH, my afternoon jazz program. I rose and switched the station to WERZ. The music that made me feel as though I were an unwilling passenger in the backseat of an electric blue Camero did seem to relax Manny's bunched muscles. His fingers stopped picking and began a soft drumming.

"Was it something to do with the kids in school?" I prompted.

"Yeah."

"Your friends?"

"No!"

"Other kids, huh?"

"Yeah. Other kids." His voice sounded hard. "Those other kids."

"Other kids can be mean sometimes."

"I hate mean." He still wasn't looking at me, but I only insisted that he look at me when the two of us were confronting some issue that involved lying or stealing or mouthing off at the soccer coach. I knew somehow that this was a different situation.

What went on in Manny's life when I wasn't there? What lay in between the cheery missives from his teachers, the bulletins Manny constructed in his morning notes and dinner conversations? Which girl did he pine for? What kids in his upstairs classes, beyond the Resource Room, really liked him? Who did he have lunch with?

There was so much I'd never learn from our third son. But I knew him in a strange, visceral way. And I took on his crises as though they were my own, the way I'd always done with Bill, Sebastian and Lenya.

My adult self could never quite shake younger memories of rejection and lost loves, household upheavels, parental storms, abortion, friendships gone mysteriously awry. Empathy brought me close to my children's lives, useless as that may have been in giving them direction.

Yet the one experience I could not share with my Puerto Rican son was the very matter that concerned him as he lingered over his mug of milky tea, allowing me to quiz him.

"They called me a nigger." Manny spat the sentence into a

silence.

It was bound to happen. Rochester was not the most enlightened spot on the globe. On the other hand, there were not the simmering hatreds of a bigger city. Manny had been welcomed into the homes of his white friends, roller skated with an ever-changing roster of white girls, gotten perfectly acceptable haircuts from white barbers, walked freely in any part of town.

But it was bound to happen. His skin color would be turned into an insult just as surely as if he had been fat, or spoke with a lisp, or walked with a limp.

All this I recollected in tranquility. At that moment, though, when Manny said "nigger," I lashed out at those nameless mean kids.

"You're not a nigger, you're a spic!" Manny's expression was so startled that I began to laugh. "They're so ignorant they don't even know the difference between an African American and a Puerto Rican!"

Manny managed a weak smile.

"And what do they call Danny when they're being mean?" I asked, referring to his Korean classmate. Manny didn't know, so I tore a clean sheet from my pad and together we made a list of every racial slur we could think of and the kids we knew who might have heard those words flung at them. The list wasn't long, after all this was New Hampshire, but it served the purpose.

I asked Manny to rip up the paper. He patted me on the shoulder and took his backpack up to his room. Before long I

heard him singing to his music.

"You said *what?*" Charter had laid his briefcase on the table and was putting the beer and milk in the fridge.

"It just came out. I was so pissed."

"Well, that's one way to approach it," he laughed.

"But seriously, I've been trying to figure out how Manny really views himself. Do you think he's unhappy about his color?"

Charter took off his jacket and lit a cigarette. "Hard to say. In a way, he tends to speak of himself in terms of what he can do."

"Yeah, you're right. 'I'm a great skier.' 'I'm a very good painter.'"

"Frankly, considering what he has to overcome, color is the least of his problems. He'll handle it. You know Manny...he doesn't stay upset long. Let's see how things go. He may need a hit of Bill's black-is-beautiful routine."

"Excellent idea. Well, enough." I went into the other room and called up the stairs, "Manny, when you get organized, would you bring down your homework assignments?"

"I will do that, Mom."

At the last minute, two teachers conspired to make sure that

Manny and Flo went to the Junior Prom. I first heard about it when Gail called on the Tuesday before.

"We don't know what happened, but Florence has a dress and no date. And Manny's been dropping hints all month that he'd love to go, but he hasn't asked anybody. You know how shy he is. Well, the school nurse--do you know Ann?--told me about Flo and we just kind of put the two of them together. I hope you don't mind!"

"Incredibly creative, Gail. Now what?"

"Well Florence has already told Manny what color her gown is and Manny has to get a tux with a tie and cummerbund to match it. Also a corsage. I know it's short notice..."

"No, this'll be fun. What else?"

I was abysmally ignorant of prom protocol. My Convent of the Sacred Heart certainly didn't countenance such things. And no boy from the local high school had ever invited me to one. The closest I'd come was the Gotham Ball, an event designed to introduce young ladies to Catholic society and, more importantly, to Catholic boys. My mother insisted I attend. My boyfriend was Protestant so I had been compelled to spend that gala evening with two unenthusiastic escorts whose best feature was their height. Not so different from the Manny-Flo arrangement after all.

Charter wasn't much help either. He had gone to his junior prom with Marilyn Richards, a bona fide girlfriend. But that was in the Fifties and things were simpler then. In any case, he remembered nothing of the details.

Luckily, Gail was right up to the minute with prom information.

"Here's the schedule. You bring Manny to Florence's house for pictures around 3:00 on Saturday. Then Florence has invited Manny to join her and another couple for dinner. She insists that she pay for herself, and she's driving. At 7:00, parents and friends come to the gym for the opening ceremony. And that's it. Your only problem will be finding a tux at this late date."

When Manny came home from school he followed his usual routine, made a sandwich, poured a glass of milk, sat down at the table.

"How was your day?"

"Great." Manny's day was always great.

"Anything interesting happen?"

"I finished sanding my wood project."

"Anything else?" Manny paused and looked up at the ceiling as if searching his memory for something. He reached into his back pocket and pulled out a wad of folded papers. One by one he smoothed them out.

"Oh yeah. I'm going to the prom."

"That's terrific, Manny. With whom?"

He ran his finger along the words on the top sheet. "Flo. Her dress is blue. Not light blue. More a darker blue. Darker than light. I have to buy a corsage." He said the last word carefully, testing the sound of it. "The kind that goes on your hand." Flo had written it all down, including directions to her house.

"You must be excited."

"Not really." But Manny looked pleased.

Charter called four rental places before he found one in Portsmouth that still had a tux and darker than light blue accessories. Manny and I drove back to Rochester where he spent half an hour at Studley's Florist choosing a wrist corsage that satisfied his aesthetic demands, finally settling on an arrangement of small dyed carnations in a nest of shiny leaves and baby's breath.

He stayed late at school for the rest of the week, rehearsing the grand processional march. By Saturday he was ready.

Word had spread through the community. Joyce and Nick came over for a viewing. We took pictures of him on the porch against pine clapboards. Wim and Jonell needed to fuss over him, so he posed between them in their garden beside the little fountain where 'Manneke Pis' arched his little stream into a pool and we took more pictures. Then on to Flo's house for yet another round of photos.

The May afternoon was heavy with late spring heat. As we pulled into the yard, Flo came out to meet us, scattering siblings who were building a frog house near a shallow puddle.

"Please come in." The shades were pulled in the small livingroom. Parents and relatives filled every couch and easy chair, smoking and drinking beer. Somewhere a television mumbled. Charter and I shook everyone's hand. Manny shook everyone's hand. Flo let us talk for a few minutes about the

weather and the origin of the stuffed bass that hung on a plaque on the wall. Then, as though this was one of the scenes she'd rehearsed, she disappeared into the kitchen and returned with a white box.

The boutonniere she had chosen for Manny was a carnation of the precise shade of the ones he now affixed to her wrist as we took more pictures.

Finally we repaired to the front lawn for more pictures.

In one snapshot, an elegant young man in a tuxedo, wearing my father's pleated shirt with the onyx buttons and matching cufflinks, crooks his right arm for a young woman in a gentian blue gown with sleeves of blue lace and a bow at the hip. Her curly red hair is pulled back on one side in a jeweled comb.

In another, the couple stands behind a row of grinning children, one of whom is suffocating a frog in her cupped hands.

Later they appeared briefly, moving in sedate procession in a sea of frothy gowns and polished shoes under a canopy of tinsel streamers. In the stands, bulbs flashed. Red lights winked on video cameras. Then the grownups filed out to the recorded strains of the first dance. Manny waved to the crowd as he crossed the foul line.

To the best of my knowledge, he and Flo never saw each other outside of school again.

Charter ferried me to his house in the woods in the 1965 International pickup he'd driven twice across the continent. It was our only means of transportation in the early days, a durable vehicle the engine of which he'd rebuilt twice and under which he spent a portion of every month. I liked driving it despite having to double clutch on the downshift and haul on the steering wheel for all but the gentlest turns.

It became my habit on Saturdays to deliver our trash to the dump on the way to pick up the mail. Before our dump became first a landfill and then a waste transfer station, the routine was to back up to the edge of a smoldering mountain of garbage, let down the tailgate, climb into the bed and fling trash bags, sheetrock scraps, dead toasters, broken rakes, used tarpaper, tangled chicken wire and anything else left over from the week's labors onto the pile. Smoke of a particular, unmistakable scent drifted in the air and bottles exploded with the sound of muffled firecrackers.

Neighbors regularly lingered at the dump, exchanging pleasantries and gossip, keeping an eye out for anything that, in their opinion, had no business being thrown away. Not infrequently, items brought to be discarded never hit the ground. And though I wasn't nearly as determined as some when it came to dump picking, I did acquire a pink bathroom scale this way, along with a boy's bike lacking only a pedal and a pair of waders that could be made serviceable again with duct tape.

The dump keeper, Ray Berube, knew just about everyone in town. Once I'd been there enough Saturdays, he recognized me,

too. But he never knew my real name because he christened me himself.

"Good morning, Mrs. Rockefeller!" he would shout as I ground the truck into reverse and eased it to a stop. "Beautiful morning we're having."

It was that old International, I'm sure, with its mismatched fenders and wired up tailgate that prompted his little joke. And when Charter had the truck repainted a deep shade of red, Ray took immediate note.

"New truck, eh Mrs. Rockefeller?"

"Certainly not, Doctor," I replied, for he deserved a title as much as I did. "Just a coat of paint. How do you think I stay so rich?"

When I bought a little used car and carried our garbage in its trunk, Ray remained cheerful, but he stopped calling me Mrs. Rockefeller.

Charter loved that truck. He kept its oil changed and its innards lubed. He washed it regularly and in winter took care to spray up under the wheel wells to remove the road salt. One Christmas I had the bench seat reupholstered as his present.

When it came time, in the summer of Bill's 15th year, to teach him to drive, Charter sat on the passenger side of the floor-mounted gearshift and they set off down the driveway. They weren't gone long. Within minutes the truck reappeared with Charter at the wheel. It had a fresh dent in the left fender. Amazingly, Charter was laughing.

"Bill took a slow turn at the mailboxes and kept on turning. Right into a telephone pole!"

"Anybody hurt?" I echoed what my Dad would invariably say as, one by one, most of his children sent moving vehicles off embankments, into snowdrifts, caroming into other cars and skidding into ditches. No amount of manual-studying or shift-practicing in empty parking lots seemed adequate to prepare any of us for life on the road. Time alone had taught us, and I was resigned to watching my own children destroy clutches and crumple the bumpers of other people's cars on the journey toward driving competence.

Like my father, Charter was patient and generous with kids. But the day Bill came home from visiting his friends in Barnstead with several broken leaf springs and the hood of the truck in the bed, he and Charter had words. Money aside, sentiment aside, it was almost impossible to find replacement parts for the International. We never did discover how Bill managed to dislodge the hood from its hinges. And it was blind luck that led Charter to the only matching springs in the corner of the last junk yard he searched.

When Sebastian got his driver's license a couple of years later, he passed the test in my Pinto. It, too, took its share of beatings as Sebastian mastered the finer points of driving, but the emotional aspects weren't quite as fraught, despite incidents that included a licenseless, uninsured young woman running into his rear end at a red light at a Concord intersection.

Yet, more than transportation, trucks seem to me to serve the same function in the lives of grown men as Tonka toys did when they played with them as boys. Like their tiny counterparts, real trucks--sturdy to the point of invincibility, straightforwardly masculine in design and purpose, rude of noise and idiosyncratic of behavior--needed a firm hand and a kind of rough attention to detail. All trucks, evidently, required special sneakers, heavy duty shocks, esoteric electrical equipment, and particular tending in the areas of starter motors and generators.

Charter was versed in all of these matters and willing to share his knowledge. In fact, I think he felt it his obligation to pass along his understanding of the intricacies of a truck exhaust system or radiator to the next generation of truck drivers. He'd taught himself--lying, for instance, on a cardboard sheet under the front end on a brutally cold Christmas day--and he would teach Bill, Sebastian and Manny.

I like to think that the three of them can now find a truck's dipstick, struggle successfully with a frozen lugnut, examine the shade of their transmission fluid or patch a rust hole in a rocker panel. I really want to see each of my boys dealing with the proletarian problem of making some superannuated, obsolete vehicle deliver one more week, one more month of usefulness.

There's no better teacher than this truck. And no better teacher than the man who taught himself--out of necessity and stubbornness and the realization that his father taught him none

of this--to cope.

In the end, unwilling to put Fred of Knight's Garage in the position of giving one more inspection sticker to a decidedly marginal rig, Charter finally sold the old truck to a neighbor who wanted it for farm chores. He asked \$3.65 more than the \$500 he'd bought it for. Barred from public roads, increasingly reluctant to start, it finished its days parked in a field like a tired work horse.

Next it was Manny's turn, and both Charter and I had a go at teaching him to drive. It was hopeless. The boy who negotiated skis down the steepest incline over the most daunting moguls, simply could not coordinate his feet and hands to the demands of brake, clutch, steering wheel and gearshift. Never mind directional signals or windshield wipers. Our lessons usually ended with Manny slumped over the wheel, defeated and depressed.

So we turned him over to Mr. Towle of Towle's Driving School in Rochester. Three afternoons a week, Mr. Towle, wearing a dark suit and a red tie, picked Manny up at the high school for an hour of driving in his spiffy black Pontiac with automatic transmission. According to Mr. Towle's reports, they confronted the STOP sign and the YIELD, the traffic light, the pedestrian crosswalk. They negotiated the streets of Rochester, Route 16 to Dover, back roads, and even the Spaulding Turnpike. For six weeks, the soft-spoken Mr. Towle persisted. At the end of the course, he asked to meet with us.

"Manny's doing much better. He seems more confident. But I think he would benefit from another six weeks." We did not question his judgment.

Meantime, there was the issue of what Manny would drive when he got his license. Clearly our manual transmission vehicles were out of the question. Charter decided to look for a used truck.

"It'll get him around and he can use it on weekends to make extra money." He found a nice little longbed Chevy that had belonged to a guy with a flooring business. It wasn't exactly a teenager's dream, but Manny seemed quite pleased. The truck was purchased and parked near the woodshed, waiting for its driver to qualify.

Manny didn't do so well on the written part of his driver's test, but Mr. Towle was sure he knew the material, so he administered the test orally and Manny passed. Shortly thereafter, he passed the road test as well.

Manny made up business cards in Print Shop with his name and phone number, a picture of a truck, and a short list of odd jobs he'd do. His license arrived from Concord.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, Josh called to invite Manny to his house. "I'll drop you off," I said, hesitant to let him loose alone on the road so soon. "You can drive on the way over." With the conscious effort of someone in whom the habit is not ingrained, I buckled my seatbelt. Manny did likewise.

The day was sunny and the wet snow that had fallen the night before was melting quickly. Manny put the car in gear and eased

RFD#2
Barrington, NH 03825
September 22, 1986

Peter Paiton, Chairman
Barrington School Board
France Road
Barrington, NH 03825

Dear Peter:

I have just received a copy of Kathy Waterhouse's excellent letter regarding the situation of busing (or lack of it) to the Rochester schools. I would like to add a few comments.

Our son Manny, because he is coded, will be guaranteed transportation to Rochester for the duration...3 years...and so will several other Barrington students. But simply the fact that my son is covered does not satisfy my concerns.

The Rochester school system is, in my opinion, an excellent one and offers certain students superior services to those offered by Dover. Too, the school populations are growing and changing at an alarming rate and, since we do not plan to build our own high school in the near future, I think that we would be prudent to keep our options as various as we can. The fact that Dover is for the next few years our high school of record should not in any way prevent us from availing ourselves of other options. After all, both schools seem to be more than willing to accept our kids, and, year by year, each school will have more room, less room, different programs, etc.

But to address the transportation question directly: If, as Ms. Waterhouse has suggested, you establish Dover as the only option (something which I disagree with), then starting next year, all 8th graders would automatically go there. Meanwhile, you could still bus all currently enrolled Rochester kids and pay for it with the difference in tuition that exists at the 9th grade level. However, if you were to accede to the wishes of a fairly large number of parents in our community, you might allow the Rochester option and pay for the transportation the way Strafford does: each family would be charged a weekly busing fee. And if there are families who cannot afford that, again the difference in first year tuition would cover them...they could be given a transportation grant.

I believe that keeping both high schools in the picture will benefit our kids, offer our families important choices (Manny, for instance, is being served by the Rochester system in ways that Dover simply cannot match...and that will eventually make him a real benefit to his community), and give Barrington the optimum return on its educational dollar. The bus policy can always be changed, especially if there are enough people who would like a change. I appreciate your time and study on this matter and would hope you are still open to reconsideration. And I would like to schedule a meeting (along with other interested parents) as soon as possible.

Sincerely, Marie Harris

RFD#2

Barrington, NH 03825

September 22, 1986

Peter Paiton, Chairman
Barrington School Board
France Road
Barrington, NH 03825

Dear Peter:

I received a copy of Kathy Waterhouse's letter to you re the subject of busing kids to Rochester, and I'd like to add a few comments to her excellent letter.

First, I will say that our son Manny, who is coded, will have transportation to Rochester for as long as he attends school there...three more years. I understand there are several other coded kids who will have that same situation. Therefore, although I am not personally going to be deprived of transportation for my son,

P.O. Box 58
Barrington, New Hampshire 03825
September 18, 1986

Peter Paiton
Chairman, Barrington School Board
France Road
Barrington, New Hampshire 03825

Dear Mr. Paiton:

I am writing in regard to the busing policy for the freshmen and sophomores from Barrington attending Spaulding High School. Very simply, it is a classic example of coercion; forcing Barrington students to attend Dover High School.

This decision is impractical to begin with. High school students attending Dover High School cost the town of Barrington \$2887 per year tuition, while those attending Spaulding High School save the town twenty-eight dollars per student per year as Spaulding High School tuition is only \$2859 per year.

Watson Transportation charges the town of Barrington one dollar and twenty-five cents per mile regardless of which school it is transporting students to; so unless there is a large difference in distance from the Middle School to Dover High School and that from the Middle School to Spaulding High School this cannot be a factor.

Watson Transportation has supplied the information that the buses, although rated for 66 students, can only comfortably transport 45-50 high school students. Presently there are 34 seniors and 47 juniors attending Spaulding High School. Why is there only one bus provided for even this number of students-there should be two to provide for these students. Granted, a lot of these students drive, but what happens on a bad driving day?

The total Barrington student body attending grades nine through 12 at Spaulding High School is approximately 133 (based on an estimated 28 sophomores and an estimated 24 freshmen given to me by the appropriate school offices). Taking into account normal absences, etc., two buses (the same two buses necessary to safely transport juniors and seniors only) could offer transportation for all Barrington students attending Spaulding High School.

Barrington residents are levied premium taxes and receive relatively few services for this payment. It would seem that a savings in tax expenditures would be appreciated. These few students attending Spaulding High School are saving us \$3,724.00 per year (with 133 estimated students in grades 9-12), yet the School Board chooses to discriminate against those who, for whatever reasons decide not to attend Dover High School. If Dover was to be the high school that Barrington students were to attend, then it is unclear to me why the town of Barrington even agrees to pay tuition for Spaulding High School. Rather than change the bus policy, why not address the real issue and establish a policy stating that starting this June all students graduating from Barrington Middle School will attend one high school, or parents pay tuition and provide transportation to the other.

As the situation stands right now, there are many taxpayers who must either disrupt their student's lives by enrolling them in another school after these first important weeks of school have passed; or suffer yet another inconvenience of "country living" and provide transportation to and from school. Either solution is unacceptable when you look at the all the available information. Hopefully you can solve this situation at this level, as I am not alone in this protest.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy J. Waterhouse

Kathy J. Waterhouse

cc: Barrington Middle School
Marie Harris
Rochester School Department
C. F. Weeks

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So many turning points in my life have happened by accident or serendipity. This is not to say I was powerless. I could have chosen, for instance, to abort the child whose incipient existence powered the ceremony that was my first marriage.

Scarcely more than a year later, wife of a Yale undergraduate, mother of a son, my college career temporarily ended, I could have repudiated my second unplanned pregnancy, even in a state where contraception was illegal and abortion almost unavailable.

But instead, while most of my friends were busy finishing degrees, traveling abroad, finding jobs in cities I'd never visited, I had opted for trucking a couple of infants in the determined wake of their ambitious father, driving unpredictable automobiles, settling and resettling in rented apartments and university housing, filling shelves and bureau drawers and bookcases with the contents of labeled boxes.

For two years in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, I tended the babies and took courses in literature and music appreciation while my husband finished graduate school. When he got his first job, we moved to the tiny village of Aurora, New York. Not much older than the students he taught, I was the professor's wife.

When he was offered a position at Cornell, we packed up and moved down the lake to Ithaca. With the help of his parents, we bought a graceful old farmhouse on Krums Corners Road. That first spring our two acres revealed secrets only hinted at when we arrived in the fall. Quince bushes exploded into bloom, and fruit trees near the listing chicken house. Tulips and hyacinths and daffodils magically appeared in pretty groupings. There was honeysuckle, a

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trumpet vine climbing the porch, and an impossibly fragrant mock orange at the kitchen door. Someone had loved this place and I was ready to love it too, forever.

I planted more bulbs and added herbs to the perennial bed. With the help of my next door neighbors (who happily provided Willy and Sebastian with twin boys as playmates), I made the attic into a big bedroom and playroom for the kids. I had a study of my own with a roll top desk at which I completed an interesting, self-designed BA through Goddard's Adult Degree Program. All the time I was writing poetry and teaching at the public experimental elementary school where Willy and Sebastian were enrolled.

It's still painful to call up memories of those years that were in many ways so full of promise. Even now, when the boys visit, I love to haul out the albums, re-tell the stories.

(Sebastian, do you remember your imaginary friend? You called him "My Boy" and he was always with you, playing your elaborate games and taking the blame for all the mishaps. And how you killed him off one day? "He was hit by a car crossing the street to get bread for his family." Oh yes, and the Rubber Guys. You kept that collection of creatures going so long they ended up in Rubber Guy Tech! Then there was the day you and Jeremy and Ian got drunk on the wine Jeremy brought to school in his thermos. Here's you with my dish towel pinned to your super-shoulders. And here's you on a camel at the zoo. You had an eye operation, remember? You missed the first two weeks of baseball practice.

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And Willy, remember Batteries & Bulbs with Mr. Lee at East Hill School? And Mrs. Singer your art teacher. She tried so hard to divert your artistic endeavors to subjects other than sharks. Look at you in this school picture in your personally-tie-dyed shirt. Here's you with Underdog, the gentle German Shepherd. When you were a toddler you clocked him for knocking you down with his tail.)

I had my own life in Ithaca, apart from the university scene and my job as maker of dinners and small talk with scores of visiting male poets and lovesick female students. I had my own friends...women like me with children and nascent careers; artists outside academe; women academics without husbands. I was part of a women's group at a moment when such an event was practically seditious. It was an exciting time. It was a threatening time, both to men and to us women.

My husband wanted a wife. I wanted a life. He experimented with potential candidates. I experimented with alternatives to the role I'd been handed.

In the end, our marriage foundered. Willy and Sebastian witnessed, alas, one of the death throes the night I found them transfixed and silent at the bottom of the stairs. Their parents had wakened them with their raging, and they were afraid.

No need to blame. Suffice it to say my husband was disappointed in me and I in him. The details have long faded into gossip and misperception.

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June 3, 1971

Dear Annie:

I'm coming anyway. Me and the kids will be on the train. We'll meet you in Calgary and I'll tell you everything. You have the schedule.

We'd planned a summer trip to visit my sister and her family in British Columbia and I went ahead with it despite the fact that my husband had opted out. With two boys, bulging backpacks and 2000 baseball cards, I set out from Toronto. Everyone on the train was drunk and on their way to the Calgary Stampede. They made for congenial company.

September 9, 1970

Dear Annie:

What a summer! If Tango had had his way, I'd be his new wife by now! Just what I need, eh?

Thanks for everything. I know it must have been hard to add a couple of kids and a spaced out sister to your life. I'm forever in your (and George's) debt.

I guess I didn't realize how profoundly tired I was until I settled in to your routine in Fernie. It was so wonderful to sleep. To ride horseback. To laugh. And to get to know you again after all these years. (Not to mention going through weeks without arguments and accusations. God, I'm so sick of fighting.)

You and George have the relationship I'd always envisioned, that lovely combination of lives and dreams...you seem so happy with each other...and so completely yourselves.

Maybe I can find that. Or maybe I'm the kind of person who has to be alone. In any case, I have a feeling this chapter is over and done. I've come home to more of the same. Surprise surprise.

Oh yes, the pictures came back. The one of Willy and Bash holding up that little trout is priceless.

Kisses for Kirsten and Julian from their cousins.

Annie, please write soon.

The following summer I left Ithaca in an old blue station wagon towing the U-Haul which held the flotsam and jetsam of my nine year tenure as the professor's wife.

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I put a pin in a map and found a small two-bedroom apartment in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I enrolled Willy and Sebastian in second and fourth grades at Little Harbor School.

That Christmas they were to be with their father (it's odd how divorce changes the linguistics of a life, stripping the parties of their given names and consigning them to live forever in each other's conversation as "the children's father...the children's mother"). I booked a ticket to Paris and spent Christmas Eve in Notre Dame listening to Midnight Mass.

For the next two weeks I wandered the damp streets as I'd once explored Greenwich Village, a beat-type, dressed in black, carrying a notepad and a book to read at caf^e tables. I loved the sensation of being alone in Paris, speaking convent French to waiters, drinking red wine at noon and flirting with Tufan, the night porter at my dingy hotel. God, how I wanted to remain a minor character in that romantic novel!

Back in Portsmouth, I found a part-time job and made some new friends. My first chapbook of poems was published. I began to feel confident and happy. And I was pleased at how content Willy and Sebastian seemed with their friends and their teachers and their small city life. We lived there for a year, the three of us in our simple world of bike rides and baseball cards.

Not that I regret having met the talented painter; not that I wasn't seduced by his altogether un-academic and manic enthusiasm for art and adventure, I just shouldn't have moved in with him. He

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and I could have stayed great buddies, even lovers for a while, without my hastily and thoughtlessly packing belongings and powerless kids off to a drafty farmhouse on a lonely hill in Barnstead, New Hampshire. Yet those years taught me many things survival and things I still needed to know about myself.

Soon after we four set up housekeeping, Arthur's ten year old daughter came to live with us. I had persuaded Arthur to try and find the daughter he'd given up as an infant. He had no idea of the whereabouts of his ex-wife and child.

"I'll call her parents in Buffalo. We always got along," he said. He heard the terrible news over the phone. Lenya's mother had been murdered by a hitchhiker in Florida.

I say this now with the same matter-of-factness that the event presented itself to us that summer. Her grandparents brought Lenya to visit, we asked if she could stay, and by September she was leaving for school on the bus with her new brothers.

It was that simple and that momentous. What else could we have done? Unlikely family that we were, we wanted Lenya to join it. Her grandparents must have talked long into that night they consigned her, their only grandchild, to our care. They loved her; some years later, they would parent her again.

Lenya rarely spoke about her mother's death, and when she did she seemed strangely philosophical, almost fatalistic. "The police came to our apartment and told me. I called my Grandma and said, 'Are you sitting down? I have bad news.'"

How does one determine what a child's trauma warrants? Her mother killed by a drifter on a road in Florida. A father whom she'd

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never met. Strangers becoming her step-mother and siblings. I looked for signs. Would she wake crying in the night? Lapse into unexplained silences? Would she be able to handle school? Clearly this was a situation demanding psychiatrists, counselors, testing. But somehow, I couldn't shove her into the glare of investigation. I just folded her into our unlikely family and watched.

Lenya was sweet-tempered and delightful. Older than Sebastian, younger than Bill, she opened a new space between the kinetic brothers. She made lots of friends. Her teachers liked her.

October 21, 1974

Dear Annie:

This girl business is very foreign to me! Does Kirsten have a room full of stuffed animals and multi-colored cosmetics? Lenya is pre-teen female cubed!

Well, she's settled in school and has tons of friends already. They hang on the phone every night, and every morning they call each other to discuss what's being worn for that day. (If Lenya makes the mistake of deciding on a dress when everyone else is wearing jeans, she tears upstairs and changes.)

Bash and she got on instantly. It took Willy a while longer...I think he was jealous. He kept doing little things to bug her--hiding stuff, making snide comments. At first I'd sit on his bed and go through the "I-love-you-a-huge-amount-no-one-will-ever-make-me-love-you-an-ounce-less" routine, and the "Lenya-needs-all-of-our-love-and-there's-more-than-enough-love-to-go-around" routine. No luck. Finally one day, totally exasperated by yet another nasty bit of behavior, I grabbed him firmly by the tee shirt and told him that if he didn't lay off I'd make a large dent in the sheetrock with his young body. And he actually seemed relieved! Life has been much more civilized since then, and Willy's self esteem appears intact. So much for Child Rearing 101.

Everything's great here. We're battening down the hatches in preparation for winter (I'm splitting wood like a pro). The poems get written after dinner and homework...but they are getting written. The manuscript is almost ready to send out into the world. I'm thinking about trying a new cooperative feminist press in Cambridge called Alice James Books.

I loved your last letter...write me another on some rainy day when you take a tea break.

Arthur took Lenya in stride the way he'd accepted the boys. But,

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for better or for worse, Arthur was a man preoccupied, obsessed with his painting and his dogs. He was generous in his fashion; no one was ever unwelcome in his home. But he wasn't attuned to the details of children's lives. He wasn't an attentive father; he was, like so much else in Lenya's world, simply another fact over which neither she nor the boys had any control.

Yet when Willy became a painter himself as a young man, making the decision to put art at the center of his own life, the work he created bore the bold marks of Arthur's style. Sebastian absorbed Arthur's fascination with terriers. Lenya turned to design.

Despite the scrabble for money, the isolation of our land, the long winters, we managed. We raised chickens, ducks, geese and a few nutty guinea fowl. We had a cat called Squirrel and another named Kleenex. Our house became a gathering place for rural artists, eccentric neighbors and a parade of kids.

Arthur collected a succession of Border Terriers (one of which--the redoubtable Dalquist's Ms Adelaide--came with me when I left him) and a succession of other esoteric dogs which he set to hunting woodchucks and guarding our critters from the predations of raccoons.

"Gameness counts," was his mantra. Arthur valued that trait above all others in his dogs, professional wrestlers and his friends. At least there were field trials to prove the dogs.

My parents, bless them, took my odd life in stride. Dad got on famously with Arthur when we visited. He bestowed a nickname on Lenya by way of welcoming her into the family, and responded to her ups and downs in the same antic way he did the rest of his sprawling

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brood of children and grandchildren. Once when Lenya told him, somewhat sheepishly, that she'd gotten a lot of C's on her report card, he said, "I'll give you \$50 if you get all F's." Next marking period she got A's and B's.

My first full-length book of poetry was published by Alice James Books in 1975 with one of Arthur's watercolors on the cover. I was a visiting writer in area schools and administrator of New Hampshire's fledgling Poets-in-the-Schools Program. And I became Arthur's agent, bartering his canvases for whatever we could get: once a cookstove, once a Miniature Bull Terrier puppy, once a used station wagon from McFarland Ford in Portsmouth. We even traded H&R Block for the cost of our tax preparation.

I was Arthur's model, his companion and his business manager. I was mother to three kids, housekeeper, breadwinner, writer.

But something was wrong. It finally dawned on me that I wasn't in love. And abiding love for that man was what it would have taken to sustain our life together. Instead, the relationship was deteriorating into an arrangement. Arthur's eccentricities grated on me. I was getting tired of being poor, tired of shouldering the burden of the household. He began to tell me I was cold, unfeeling.

So in our fourth summer, when Willy and Sebastian were in Colorado with their dad and Lenya was visiting her grandparents, I moved back to Portsmouth. This time I left the children behind to fend with fathers. I didn't suspect that Lenya would disappear into Arthur's new family and drift out of my life for years. I didn't plan that I would become the vacation parent to my boys. I'd meant

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it to be temporary until I'd found a good job and could support them. Street. She worked evenings in a restaurant so our schedules

One late evening months later, as I was unwinding over a glass of wine at the Press Room, telling the owner of the bar one of my embroidered stories about the theater-going public I dealt with, a bearded man in jeans and work boots joined our conversation.

newly-opened bar on our block served as our living room. The Press Room was the place we entertained and were entertained on the nights when, released from our jobs, we needed an hour or two to decompress before we went to bed.

I'd found a hybrid kind of job at Theatre by the Sea. Afternoon, I worked upstairs at various administrative tasks and at night I cheerfully ran the box office in a fashion that was the despair of my colleagues. Confined to the ticket booth, I handled cash, subscriptions, group sales, concessions, and the various prices for matinees, week nights and weekends. I was in charge of reconciling a million-dollar ticket sales. They were always a little off; I just hadn't a clue where it belonged.

But I dealt with the public successfully enough, and I discovered that I loved being part of backstage life, however tangentially.

Theatre by the Sea occupied several floors of a shabby brick building wedged between other old structures overlooking Portsmouth Harbor. One entered the offices from Market Street; the stage and the lobby were three stories below sea level. Not surprisingly, storms deposited several inches of briny water on the carpet and

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My sister Kate and I shared a small second floor apartment on Daniel Street. She worked evenings in a restaurant so our schedules were similar. Our domestic rituals were spare. But, although our interests were very different, we grew to know each other in ways that had been impossible for siblings ten years apart in age, growing up in a family of ten.

Because all we had for common space was a kitchen, a newly-opened bar on our block served as our living room. The Press Room was the place we entertained and were entertained on the nights when, released from our jobs, we needed an hour or two to decompress before we went to bed.

I'd found a hybrid kind of job at Theatre by the Sea. Afternoons, I worked upstairs at various administrative tasks and at night I cheerfully ran the box office in a fashion that was the despair of management. Confronted with student rates and senior rates, subscriptions, group sales, comps, and the various prices for matinees, week nights and weekends, I was incapable of reconciling a single evening's ticket sales. The money was always all there; I just hadn't a clue where it belonged.

But I dealt with the public successfully enough, and I discovered that I loved being part of backstage life, however tangentially.

Theatre by the Sea occupied several floors of a skinny brick building wedged between other old structures overlooking Portsmouth Harbor. One entered the offices from Market Street; the stage and the lobby were three stories below at sea level. Not infrequently, storms deposited several inches of briny water on the carpet and

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wreaked havoc with an electrical system that Michael, the Stage Manager and Phil, the jack-of-all-trades seemed forever to be modifying.

It was an Equity theatre so actors came from New York and Boston and beyond to work with local thespians before small audiences in productions that defied the limitations of the little stage.

I hung around rehearsals, one ear tuned to the telephone, and, when Box Office hours were over, I switched the phone to the answering machine and slipped into an empty seat or hunkered on a stair to watch the second acts of my favorite plays over and over. *Anna Christie* was my first, followed by *Vanities*. Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap* filled the weeks before and after Christmas; Jack Gilhoulily's new play, *Afternoons in Vegas*, outraged the matinee crowd in early spring; a wonderful version of *Under Milk Wood*. A mediocre but energetic musical finished the season.

There were intrigues and liaisons, rowdy celebrations, stage set disasters, medical emergencies, practical jokes, bruised egos. There were costumes and make-up, music and blue lights. The people I met seemed, if not larger than life, then denizens of a life outside my own experience. I was as amazed and bedazzled as if I'd joined the circus.

I stayed up nights till nearly dawn. I made wonderful friends and had a few lovers. At thirty three, I was living the single life I'd forsaken over a decade ago. Meeting the love of my life was the last thing on my mind that March night when Charter interrupted my account of how some irate ticket-holder had called me a Communist.

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Several nights later, when the woods were dripping and still, Charter Weeks brought me to what he called "the last known hippie commune in the East" at 10:00 at night after I'd finished work at the theatre. We drove north on the highway from Portsmouth in his blue and white pickup, west onto Route 9 to Barrington, down two miles of empty dirt road to the end of a path where we parked and walked, breaking through snow crust, to the hand-built house that grew from a lap of rock and sheltering trees. I was thirty-four years old and I felt like a girl.

In those days the whole house was a single room with a futon on a loft over the kitchen. A Crawford Anniversary Special cookstove heated the place and warmed the pork chops and broccoli and potatoes that Charter had made for our dinner. A rough hewn tree trunk served as the building's center post. Large windows, salvaged from a university yard sale, reflected the room in those wavy patterns old glass makes. Japanese paper globes diffused the light. On the floor by the cast iron sink which was set in a long pine counter was a bucket of water drawn from the outside pump. Charter put on a Bach recording. For all its pioneer feel, the house had electricity. "For the music," he said. "And oh," he said, "there's an outhouse."

Well, it was a lovely outhouse, with a glass door that faced south into trees and stars and birds. Only years later, after the electric water pump, the shower and washer and hot water heater, the phone and phone answering machine, the computer, did we finally install what is quaintly called "indoor plumbing."

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I kept the job in Portsmouth for another five months, working with Theatre by the Sea's summer stage manager, Charlie Davisson. He was my last connection to the world I was leaving, and my most treasured. Our friendship persists.

I spent weekends in the Barrington woods. Bill (a teenager and no longer Willy) and Sebastian came for the summer. On Saturdays and Sundays they lived in a tent on the hill behind the house. Predictably, they hated it. No friends. No night life. And all that business of hauling water. Bathing in the Isinglass River. Stacking winter wood. Weeding. It would be a few more years before country living held any pleasure for them.

Charter and I married in November. It was an unceremonious affair in the mobile home of a red-headed Justice of the Peace. His mother had her TV turned up and, how could one forget, we signed the papers to a Roloids commercial. *How do you spell relief?* Afterward, we drank champagne with friends.

Though both of us had new jobs--first as employees of a small advertising agency, then later as partners in our own marketing company--our months were shaped by the rhythms of the seasons and the ongoing project that was our house.

The first addition, at which we hammered away evenings and weekends, included a real bedroom and living room, a cold cellar and shower room, a greenhouse. Community members helped fill in the skills we didn't have.

Twelve families lived at Scruton Pond Farm Community: the original few who'd bought the land and built their houses with hand

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tools, and the others who'd come later, drawn by a vision of shared lives. The community was thriving when I moved in, Charter's "new one."

Although the townspeople still cast a wary eye on the bearded, long-haired hippies, the members of the Community, many of them natives of New Hampshire returned from university and metropolis, were in fact involved in ordinary pursuits. One by one, I met the lawyer, the nurse practitioner, the midwife, the builder, the social worker, the carpenter...all of them and their children and animals.

Our nearest neighbor, Win, built our chimney. Alan's uncle, a taciturn man who chewed his way through innumerable cigars, plastered the walls. Tony consulted on the roofing.

I learned about sheetrock. I pounded nails and painted and snapped blue chalk dust lines on plywood. I ferried building supplies in the pickup and got a hammer holster for my birthday. What Charter had taught himself, he tried to teach me. I took to those tasks more readily than I had to box office matters.

We started the summer's vegetable seeds indoors in February. We planted peas in blackfly season when the ground began to warm. By mid-June, the garden at the edge of the woods was striped with feathery carrot tops, rough radish leaves, spikes of onions, rows of tomato and eggplants collared with tarpaper against cutworms, mounds of squash and cucumber, pole beans, lettuces, and red-tinged beet greens. Indigo buntings nested in the raspberry bushes. The flute song of the wood thrush echoed in the trees.

I was halfway through a second manuscript, a long connected poem called *Interstate*.

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Rebellious daughter, oldest sibling, unmanageable wife, enthusiastic if reluctant mother of two sons and a borrowed daughter, I'd never planned this life. But, as my friend Charlie Pratt wrote in an essay on pruning ancient apple trees, "whatever decisions you make become fate, their alternatives barely imaginable."

Having decided to throw in my lot with Charter Weeks, I had perforce admitted to my already sprawling family his needy mother, his father and his father's new wife, and his sister Charity: a cast that was threatening to play on like a haphazardly directed light opera.

My mother-in-law, Louise, was the undisputed star of the show. The first thing she said to me, as she raised her hennaed head off the hospital pillow, was "I have a dress exactly like that." I was wearing a gauzy, black and white Indian print summer frock. I smiled as Charter introduced me. But she cut through any further formality her son might have been planning and pulled me directly into her orbit. "It's a hiatal hernia. You can't believe how painful it is. My doctor said it's the worst case he's ever seen. These nurses don't understand how much pain I'm in. They won't give me more medication. And that night nurse has been very rude to me. Marie dear, could you reach that pitcher of water. I'm in terrible pain. Oh how I want to go home." She lay a graceful hand on her powdered cheek.

Before I could respond, Charter moved to her bidding, shuffling the plastic containers on the shelf that straddled her midsection. He murmured reassuring sentences that sounded as though they'd been

repeated for years.

"You don't need to do this," he'd said to me. "I have to visit Louise in the hospital but you don't have to come."

"Of course I will. I want to meet her."

Louise Fulton Weeks lived alone in a small apartment in Durham, the university town where she and her ex-husband had raised their twins. Divorced in late middle age, stripped of her status as the professor's wife, she'd spent the bulk of her settlement on a series of frantic moves and an ill-conceived business scheme involving second-rate oil paintings and fly-by-night dealers. If her daughter had been at her beck and call in the early years, tending to the household chores while her mother smoked and drank wine in the darkened livingroom, now it was her son whom she called every day with her problems. Problems with the landlord or the neighbors. Disputes with the electric company. Furniture that needed moving.

And always her physical complaints. Pain accompanied her everywhere like an arthritic angel, her loyal accomplice. She gave it many names: my knee, my shoulder, my foot, my heart, my lungs, my eyes, my bladder, my spine. She doted on it, insisting on the best specialists--usually from Boston; she expressed nothing but contempt for local physicians--and the most modern hospitals--often in Boston. Her pain, her angel, was a source of great pride; over the fourteen years I knew her, it confounded doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, counselors and friends. There was no treatment effective enough nor pill strong enough to vanquish it. Pain sat up nights in all the silent rooms from Durham to Portsmouth to the spartan bed in the nursing home where, one February morning, she

dismissed it.

Charter dutifully attended to Louise, fielding her daily phone calls, moving her furniture, calming the health professionals who often turned to him in frustration. He tried to shield me from her escalating demands, but in the end, Louise prevailed; her voice became a persistent drone below the ordinary noise of our days. "Hi, honey," she'd begin. "How are you?" But she never wanted to know.

At the end of our first visit, as I chattered on about Indian cotton dresses and Charter watered the dying floral arrangements on the windowsill, Louise suddenly reached out and took my hand in a surprisingly strong grip. Her moist, blue-lined eyes widened and she whispered urgently, "Don't go!"

My writing life was a sub-plot. A web of correspondence connected me to writers all over the country. And I had established several crucial relationships with the women I'd worked with at Alice James Books.

AJB--with its base in Cambridge, Mass--lived a summer life at Jean Pedrick's Skimmilk Farm in Brentwood, New Hampshire. Starting in 1976, poets gathered there every Monday for a rigorous writing workshop followed by a lunch assembled from our singular inspirations and presented in poetically correct abandon upon a wooden table in a room designed for family gatherings.

To the Skimmilk workshop came my pieces of *Interstate*, raw and in need of sanding. To the Skimmilk table came questions, disguised as anecdotes, begging for definition. I brought my entire family to the farm--as poem, as story, as conversation--because I had somehow

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to make sense of what was happening to me. I was at once happy in a way I could recognize and unhappy in ways that I could finally name.

Bill and Sebastian threaded our lives like bright dragonflies, lighting and leaving, disappearing for months, then back for a season. Thus, we experienced their years as adolescents piecemeal. Our Barrington lives had a unique character.

For instance, Charter came up with the idea for Sebastian's first summer job. "Tea!" Charter proposed. "Gather wild herbs and flowers, dry them, package them, sell them. You could," Charter told him, "make big money!"

So Sebastian sallied forth each morning with his knife and his burlap feed bag. He cut goldenrod and raspberry leaves, picked comfrey and mint, wintergreen and yarrow, brought them back to dry on wire racks, stripped leaves from stems and packaged them in plastic bags. Sebastian designed the label with Charter's help and printed it up on squares of colored paper. SEBASTIAN'S SUMMERTEA. We drove him to country stores and farmer's markets with his product. By the end of that summer, deducting expenses, Bash had netted \$75.

Over the following summers he was variously dishwasher in a local diner, waiter, maker of espresso and multi-colored gelatos for Portsmouth's tourists. One memorable season, when Sebastian contracted mono and couldn't work, Charter devised an alternative to a completely inactive convalescence.

"You want to be a writer? OK. I'll pay you \$4 an hour to write."

I never thought Sebastian would buy it.

"\$4 an hour, minimum 4 hours a day. But you can't screw around."

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I don't care what you write as long as you write." And he wrote, day after day, the poems and stories that he brought and read at Skimmilk.

Sebastian grew unbearably tall all at once; his words tumbled from his mouth at the speed of thought to arrive, tangled in the listening air, like down from a blown dandelion. He was curious, inventive and solitary. Unlike our relationship with Bill, who drifted through frequently in those days, our bond with the young man Sebastian was becoming developed more slowly.

Bill lived with us for a year between high school and college filling our small house with reggae music and watercolors. He had a job teaching learning disabled children. Bill had met his match in Charter, and he had met an artistic soulmate. When they weren't enagaged in heated debates over garden chores--Bill once arrived home to announce that there was this wonderful structure up the road wherein one might simply choose mature carrots and broccoli and lettuce, bagged and ready to pop in the fridge--or oil changes or household responsibilities, they were hunched over a drawing board discussing design or deep in conversations about Soviet constructivist painters.

As they grew older, the boys participated more fully in our lives and decisions, but never so dramatically as on the night in 1984, before he left to return to college, when Bill said, "Go to bed, Mom."

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A week earlier, I'd picked Bill up at Logan airport and on the ride back told him about my kid-anxiety. I'm not sure why I involved Bill in this matter except we'd developed the habit of talking to each other about whatever was on our minds.

Silas and the Weeks genetic line aside, Charter had more than once broached the subject of children to me. He thought he'd like to have a child of his own. The topic, I explained to Bill on our drive back, was guaranteed to bring me to tears no matter how I promised myself I'd be sympathetic. I was deeply in love for the first time in my life and this life seemed overflowing with possibilities. The merest suggestion of admitting a young child into my Eden was enough to depress me for days. I had no idea how to solve what was the only problem between us.

We pulled into the driveway, unloaded the duffels, Bill entered vacation mode, and we continued with our daily lives.

"Go to bed, Mom."

I overheard the beginning of their conversation, then fell asleep under a moon shining through the skylight.

"It was a four handkerchief night," was how Charter described it later. "Bill started off by telling me that you simply couldn't deal with any more kids. You needed to write, to be your own person. He said that having a kid would ruin our marriage."

Bill told Charter what he knew about me. And then Bill--wired, intense, sure in the way young men are utterly sure--said to the man who'd taught him and his brother wood and water, anarchy and personal responsibility, the pleasures and dangers of drugs, the

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importance of laughter, the ways of Zen and how to change a tire:

"Besides, you already have two sons."

You already have two sons. Those words were my reprieve. Charter was content, believing that the two boys who had entered his life through me would stay with him, with or without me.

The days were drifting toward fall. Charter and I settled into the familiar, simpler routines.

Our advertising business was thriving; the garden had yielded a freezer's worth of vegetables; and the afternoons were still warm enough to invite long soaks in the Isinglass River. We'd walk through the forest to the secluded spot with a patch of sand and a swimming hole where we'd shed our clothes and wade out to flat, half-submerged rocks to sip gin and tonics out of a mayonnaise jar.

The tension that I'd carried over the issue of another child was slipping from me as easily as tea-colored water over pebbles.

So why, a month later, when I turned on the national news fifteen minutes early and saw Manuel Cabrera speaking to a Boston-area audience, I said to Charter, "Look at this!" I'll never know.

Manny, fresh from a videotaped Charles River sail with WBZ-TV's Jack Williams; Manny, Wednesday's Child; Manny, a fourteen year old Puerto Rican orphan from Springfield, Massachusetts chosen as the segment's star--lost kid of the week--announced, straight-backed and sincere, to the viewing public on that late summer evening: "I have never had a family, and I would like one...you know: a man and a

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woman."

Charter left off doing the dishes. I stopped in the middle of the room. "Imagine. A man and a woman. Funny, we're that."

There was an 800 number on the screen.

and I agreed ourselves by finding new stations on the radio. we didn't talk much.

Maria had returned our call immediately. She'd sounded enthusiastic. She arranged the interview without telling us much more about Manny than what we'd heard on TV. We weren't at all sure that what we were doing made sense, but, we reasoned, it couldn't hurt to investigate the matter further.

"I'm Maria Edwards, Manny's social worker." She was a small, trim woman with short black hair. She spoke quickly, the edges of her English softened by the cadences of Spanish. She smiled often.

We shook hands and went into the restaurant, exchanging the comfortable pleasantries that strangers who are about to do business need. Charter and Maria ordered coffee. My tea arrived as three separate entities: a cup, a bag and a canister of rapid, coffee-flavored water. He waited in the darkened, empty room as Maria spread sheets of paper on the table and did not refer to them.

"Manny is a wonderful boy. I've known him for three years. Let me tell you about him."

The story of my boy's thirteen years, night to night and trip over baseball gloves and birthday parties, dogs and ponies, hand-me-down bicycles, stuffed animals, best friends,

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We agreed to meet Maria at a restaurant off the highway on a mid-morning in early September, 1984. Driving the three hours of interstate from New Hampshire into Massachusetts, past the old mill towns of Lawrence and Lowell toward Springfield, Charter and I amused ourselves by finding new stations on the radio. We didn't talk much.

Maria had returned our call immediately. She'd sounded enthusiastic. She arranged the interview without telling us much more about Manny than what we'd heard on TV. We weren't at all sure that what we were doing made sense, but, we reasoned, it couldn't hurt to investigate the matter further.

"I'm Maria Edwards, Manny's social worker." She was a small, trim woman with short black hair. She spoke quickly, the edges of her English softened by the cadences of Spanish. She smiled often.

We shook hands and went into the restaurant, exchanging the comfortable pleasantries that strangers who are about to do business need. Charter and Maria ordered coffee. My tea arrived as three separate entities: empty cup, tea bag and carafe of tepid, coffee-flavored water. We waited in the darkened, empty room as Maria spread sheaves of paper on the thick tablecloth but did not refer to them.

"Manny is a wonderful boy. I've known him for three years. Let me tell you what I've found out about his life."

The story of any boy's fourteen years ought to tumble and trip over baseball gloves and birthday parties, dogs and cousins, hand-me-down bicycles, stuffed animals, best friends,

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crayoned drawings stuck to refrigerators with alphabet magnets and lacy Valentines from Guess Who. It ought to be filled with summer snapshots and report cards, ticket stubs and souvenirs, an encyclopedia and a library card, ice skates.

Instead, Maria's oral history flattened the features of Manny's geography into a landscape as drear as a back alley.

He was born in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico to a mother who moved to Springfield and gave him to the state as she had his older sister and would his younger brother. For a time, it seemed that Manny and José would find a home, but the couple who took them divorced and gave them back. They were placed in a foster home and, although José stayed and grew up in that big family, Manny proved too much for his foster mother and once again he was returned to the bureaucracy charged with rescuing all the state's lost children.

"He spent a long time in a group home," Maria continued. "And he's been in two foster homes since then. He's lived with this last family for two years. Manny's in school now, but he has certain," she paused and looked at us with quiet eyes, "certain deficits... learning problems...no one's quite sure..." Her voice trailed off and her slender hands lay still on the pile of papers.

"I'll get you copies of the tests," she said. Then she brightened. "But you should meet him. He really is a special child. When you meet him, you'll be able to tell for yourselves."

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October 18, 1984

Dear Annie:

I'll use this letter to you as a sounding board. We met Manny yesterday.

It was shocking. I don't think I'd ever really absorbed the meaning of the word 'deprivation' until yesterday. Remember how we used to pray for the starving children in China and clean our plates for them? Remember those Advent afternoons at the Convent of the Sacred Heart when we delivered cans of Campbell's soup to the feet of Our Lady to be doled out to poor families? Well, that's what I thought of when we saw Manny in his foster home.

Again Maria met us in Springfield. We were taken to offices, introduced to psychologists and teachers. We heard their opinions of where Manny had been and where he might go. Someone had written on one of his evaluations, "Manuel might succeed as a factory worker or an artist."

We drove to his residence, a brick building next to a church and a vacant lot, and walked up three flights of stairs to the apartment. Manny was sitting on the living room couch with his drawings on his lap. His foster parents welcomed us as best they could: they spoke no English. Manny spoke no Spanish.

Annie, he had been living in a home where they shared no common language! He might as well have been raised in a paper bag for two years.

Manny was tall and slim. His tight black curls were cut short. Long lashes framed his dark eyes. He looked handsome in his blue pants and striped t-shirt. He was obviously shy. He showed us his room. It was clean, tidy and completely empty. No books. No posters. No magazines. Manny, at Maria's urging, laid out his drawings. "I love art," he said. His foster parents beamed and nodded.

A small breeze lifted the sheer curtains at the window,

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brought up faint sounds of skateboards and someone shouting. All of us sat with our hands in our laps, smiling and nodding, making simple English sentences. At last we escaped for a walk to Forest Park, Maria's and Manny's favorite spot. We'd brought along our terrier Adelaide to break the ice and Manny was happily leading her on the leash. We passed a car dealership with a red car in its wide window. Manny stopped to admire it.

"That's a Fiero," he announced. "I like Fieros."

"What do you think that car costs?" Charter asked him.

"Oh," Manny said, "It's very expensive. It must cost a hundred dollars. It's a Fiero. I like Fieros."

Only when we'd spent an hour in the city park did Manny begin to show us a little part of himself. He identified various birds by their calls. "I know my birds," he said when I praised him. Then he showed us the pond and the ducks and the little fish he called 'punkin seeds.' Yes, he liked to fish. Yes he liked the woods. Yes. I began to feel like an examiner, yet Manny was happy to respond to our attempts at conversation.

The adults we talked to spoke of him as a boy with "below average intelligence," but a kind kid, a nice kid. So what's "below average?" Is he just slow? Here we are presented with a boy who desperately needs a home, some stuff of his own, attention. We have no idea what we're in for, really, but who's to say some other kid wouldn't present problems? What should we do? Turn him down for a better model?

On the drive back, Charter and I questioned each other like we'd questioned Manny, only we didn't have his simple answers. What were his disabilities and could he overcome them at this age? How would a brown-skinned boy adapt in New Hampshire's bone-white society?

We were desperate to talk to someone. At Exit 41B we pulled off the highway and arrived unannounced at the home of our

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friends, Jan and Huck Keany. We spent the evening telling them about Manny; they themselves had adopted a son. They could only listen to our confusion with sympathy. Their son had not been easy to raise though they had got him as a baby.

We feel, in a crazy way, that Manny entering our lives was somehow the result of our seven years together, Bill's wonderful talk with Charter, Manny speaking to us out of the TV. It's a very strange situation, and I expect it'll stay that way. We agreed to have Manny visit us next week. More later.

Maria drove Manny to our house in the woods. The kitchen was filled with the smell of apples and cinnamon. There was a fire in the cookstove.

We spent the afternoon alternately talking with Maria and showing Manny around. He and Charter went off to the garden, where late squash and pumpkin glowed among withering vines; then to the pond, with its wooden dock and aluminum canoe, the blue row boat missing an oar, the deflated inner tube and abandoned bait pail; then through the woods to the Isinglass River. Adelaide bounded along with them.

"So what do you think, Manny?" Charter asked as they finished that first walk. "Think you might like to try it out?"

"It's quiet here," he replied.

"Is that OK?"

"Oh yes. I like quiet. Noise," he said, "confuses me."

After setting Manny to stirring the pot of fragrant pink applesauce with a huge wooden spoon, I gave Maria a tour of the house. She took notes. "The Home Study," she explained. But her detailed report made no mention of an outhouse. "Why worry the

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bureaucrats?" It was suddenly clear to me that Maria Edwards had found a home for this the most problematic of her charges. Even if Charter and I had not made our final decision, she had.

"I'll deal with the paperwork. There should be no problems." There weren't...for us. When Maria later discovered that she had no jurisdiction in New Hampshire, she contacted a social worker in our state, handed over her completed reports, and requested that they be authorized. The overworked young woman who visited us a few weeks later seemed a bit bemused, at a loss as to what more she needed to do. Evidently, aside from an hour of pleasant conversation, she was required to do very little but confirm Maria's findings. She wished us luck.

Manny visited over several more weekends that fall, each time settling further in. He met Warren and Jennifer's son Wesley and learned the twisting route of the 'bunny path' to his house. Wesley introduced him to the Anderson twins, Jacob and Jobriah, and to Samantha Bliss on whom Manny immediately developed a crush. They played together, sharing bikes and fishing rods. The community kids effortlessly incorporated his visits into their Saturdays.

It took me back to a day long ago when Willy and Sebastian, uprooted from one town and delivered to a new one, had stood on the front porch of the house, looked out over the neighborhood and said to me, "Where are the friends?"

"Over there, " I replied, and they set out to meet them.

Though, on the three hour car rides to and from Springfield,

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Manny was distressingly uncommunicative, his silences broken only by the appearance of a Fiero or some other flashy car (he knew the names of all of them), or by a tune on the radio (he knew them all, too), when he was at Scruton Pond Farm he expanded, like a dry sponge plunged in a pan of water.

He couldn't read, but he pored through our bird book, finding the chickadee and the goldfinch, searching out pictures of the heron, purple finch, towhee, wood thrush, the ovenbird that said *Teacher Teacher Teacher*. He couldn't write much, but he left us notes with big letters and tortured spelling because we'd asked that he let us know where he was. (Copy a sample note here)

One weeknight, after a Manny visit, as Charter and I assessed for the hundredth time the implications of making Manny a permanent member of our household, the phone rang.

"Is this the family that has Manny? You don't know me," the woman began, "but I had to find your number and call. I'm Manny's bus driver in Springfield. He's been on my route for more than a year."

I couldn't imagine what she would tell us.

"For the longest time, I thought that boy was retarded. You know, he'd get on the bus, sit in the same seat, never talk, never even say good morning. He just rode. The other kids would pick on him once in a while, but even then he wouldn't respond. I felt real sorry for him."

My heart sank. The worst news had arrived. This woman knew the true story firsthand.

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"But the other day--it was a Tuesday, I think--the most incredible thing happened."

I motioned to Charter to pick up the extension phone.

"Well Manny got on the bus as usual, but this time he stopped right by me. He seemed taller somehow. He looked me right in the eye and he said--loud, like an announcement--'I have a family, you know. I'm going to live with my new family any day now.' Then he sat himself down right behind me and repeated it, like to the whole world."

My eyes filled.

"It was almost shocking, you know? I mean all these months I'd been seeing him every day, just taking him for granted, then all of a sudden I see this whole different kid. It was weird. I mean I don't know who you and your husband are, but all I can say is from where I sit, you've changed that boy's life."

On December 19, 1984, Maria Edwards delivered Manuel Cabrera to his new home. His clothes were packed in a beige nylon suitcase that Maria had given him as a present. Everything else he owned, all his possessions, fit into one cardboard box.

RFD #2/Barrington 03825
January 28, 1985

Dear Posey:

I'm not altogether sure about anything! except, perhaps, that life really does lead one around by the nose.

It all began when Bill fils sat Charter down this summer and told him that he(Charter) had been the most important man in his life, that adopting a child was a terrible idea (Mom can't do that again), and that, besides, why would Charter want more kids when he already had two sons? It was a very special encounter. So, subject closed. Forget having more kids. Then, some months later, this boy appeared on TV... stared right out at us and said "I've never had a home and I would like one...you know, a man and a woman." Feeling that we qualified in at least the bare bones particulars, we investigated further, at which point, of course, we were hooked. So now there's Manny Weeks (sic) living here. All 14 years of him. Settled right in and, unbelievably, a very happy boy. Bill and Sebastian met him over Christmas and they got along famously (Bill, by the way, upon hearing of this flaunting of his perfectly good advice, replied: "14? Oh you can handle THAT."). Manny's gentle and sweet and unbelievably behind in school. That will be our biggest challenge. But he's a marvelous artist, very adaptable, quick to pick up everything from skiing to dealing with firewood to cooking, etc. Watching him blossom has some of the same kinds of rewards afforded by a toddler (but without some of the hassles... he can, after all, tie his own shoes and set the alarm in the morning!). It's exciting. Charter is taking upon himself much of the daily burden, the school meetings, the doctor's appointments, etc. And that lifts the last of my terrors of having to raise yet another child by myself (in effect).

Bill has just returned from a semester in Rome and a week in Moscow. He's a painter, bless his heart. Never mind that I've drilled into both of them that only a career in the NBA would suffice! So a starving artist and, in Sebastian's case, a starving writer. They're both very happy and quite a delight to have about... they visit often and we stay up late talking about it all, and laughing, and having adventures. I'm so comfortable with them.

Yes, I'm writing, as slowly as ever (it's only my own laziness and scatteredness that slows me up... by this time, I've resigned myself to the fact that my life will always be a zoo and I might as well accept that and write in the spaces). I'm working on a long poem about nuclear matters and my grandfather (an early member of the AEC under Truman)... when I get it done, put it in the rest of the book, and get it out of here, I may begin to write some prose.

Meanwhile, Isinglass Studio thrives... we have a goodly number of clients and the work that we do for them is, for the most part, fun and challenging. I've gotten reasonably

good at writing industrial copy, Charter's become an excellent designer, and, for fun, I do voiceovers for ads and films whenever I can. Not a bad way to put wine on the table!

Our house keeps growing, in the New England tradition. We built an addition last year that's given me a wonderful study and Charter a darkroom/studio. Now this summer we'll have to build one more room for/with Manny so we can have our bedroom back! I like that part of my life, too... the wood splitting, the building, the maple sugaring...

I've been so proud of the reviews, the praise that CIVIL WARS has gotten. I haven't read it yet, but will soon... you've told me so much about those years that it will be lovely, exciting to hear the stories again through the filter of your prose. A play? another novel as well?

How terrific that Marv loves his work, and how unusual that both of you have found what you needed in Houston (in that it's usually one person or the other is somewhere because of the other's job...). Kisses to him.

Will you be in NH this summer again? Let's try very hard to see each other. I really miss you.

Bill Matthews is a terrible person: to his sons, his friends, his colleagues. How can people go on buying him?

Who did you get to replace him?

I know you can't write... too much happening... but you might on impulse call on, say, a Saturday... or I might... (603664-7654)

Love to you and Marv and the kids.

Wane

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(Perhaps something about CW and my trip to the ice floes for the seal watch)

At Nicola's invitation, I traveled to Madison, Wisconsin in March of 1991 to give a poetry reading at the University. Manny chose the weekend of my return to run away from home.

(Fill in a bit on Nicola. Recap HS graduation, Manny's first full time job, his anxiousness to live on his own, etc.)

"It started Friday night," Charter explained, as I made a pot of tea and transmogrified from Visiting Writer to Mother. "We were at Wim and Jonell's having supper. Manny asked if he could go to Robert's, but I said no, The roads were incredibly icy and driving would be very dangerous. He wasn't happy, but I didn't pay much attention. In a few minutes he left. Told me he was going home to call Robert. By the time I got home, Manny and the truck were gone."

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"Hang on a minute. So yesterday, Saturday, he called up. I let him know I was very upset about what he did and told him to get in his truck and come home. He never showed."

I was incredulous. Manny's disobeying the no driving order and then refusing to return were acts of rebellion made larger by the fact that he'd never openly defied us. I couldn't imagine what had occurred to cause this anomaly, but I was beginning to

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suspect.

"Do you have any idea where he's staying? At Robert's?"

"No, I called Rob's mother and she thought they might be at his girlfriend's house. She gave me the address."

"The plot thickens. Now what?"

"Let's wait and see if he comes home tonight."

He didn't. Nor did he call. Shortly before midnight Sunday Charter decided to fetch him.

"Do you want me to come?"

"No, that's OK. I'll just drive up to Rochester. We'll be back soon."

I fell asleep in front of the TV. It must have been almost 2 a.m. when I heard the door open. Charter was alone.

"Oh God, now what? Couldn't you find him?"

"I found him alright."

"Is the story going to require a glass of wine?"

"I'd recommend one. You are not going to believe this."

I moved from the couch to the table, poured the wine, lit a cigarette. My head was beginning to throb.

Charter recounted the night's events. He'd knocked on Rob's girlfriend's door and was met by the two of them and a sleepy toddler clutching a bottle. Manny was asleep, Rob said, and he didn't want to leave. When Rob refused to wake Manny, Charter went upstairs, woke his son and told him to get dressed.

"I asked him quietly, said we were going home. After the third 'no,' I ordered him to get his ass out of bed and tipped him off the mattress onto the floor. He started putting his

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clothes on and I told him I'd wait in the livingroom. So I'm back downstairs when Rob starts out the door shouting, 'I'm going next door to call the police!'"

"The police! For God's sake."

"I told Rob not to be ridiculous. I didn't take him seriously, of course. By this time Manny's ready and we walk out. He's just getting into his truck when a Rochester cop arrives.

He says 'What's going on here?'

I say, 'It's OK, officer. I'm taking my son home.'

'How old is he?'

'21, but you don't understand...'

'I don't have to understand. If he's 21, he can do what he wants.'

Then he asks Manny if he wants to go with me, Manny shakes his head and the cop says 'That's it then.' He didn't want to hear about mental deficits or special needs."

"If my head didn't hurt so much," I called from the bathroom where I was rummaging around for aspirin, "this might strike me as funny."

Charter was pacing from the fridge to the table, running his fingers through his hair. "Maybe I shouldn't have dumped him out of bed. I don't know."

I put my arms around his waist. "We'll sort it out in the morning. I'll track him down. It's probably just a father-teenager number. Manny's really only turning 15 in real life. But if I run across Rob, that little twit who ought to

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know better, he *will* be sorry. Calling the police. Christ, we've been his second family!"

The next morning I called Animal Medical Center. Not surprisingly Manny hadn't shown up for work. I explained the situation to his sympathetic boss and she agreed to give him a few days grace. Then I drove to a rundown neighborhood in Rochester, looking for the house Charter had described, passing it twice before I saw the peeling numbers on its dingy gray clapboards. Only the girlfriend and her clinging child appeared behind the torn screen at the kitchen door. She didn't know anything, wouldn't look at me.

I considered searching the places Manny and Rob might have gone, but decided against it. I'd give him one more day to come home on his own.

I'd finally started back to work in my study when the phone rang.

"Marie. This is Richard. I've got Manny and his friend here at the station. I think you'd better come over, but don't bring Charter."

"Richard, what's going on?"

"I'm not sure, but he seems very upset with Charter. I've tried to talk to him, but he's not saying much. Only that he wants a police escort to go home and get his things."

Rob again!

Charter was at a client meeting. I left him a note and went up to the Barrington Police Station which shared a small

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building with the Town Library. I passed Rob in the waiting room, gave him an angry stare and went into the Chief's office. Manny was slumped in an orange plastic chair, looking the more forlorn for having lived in the same clothes for three days.

First I hugged him, then I turned to Richard. "What do you suggest?"

"Why don't you and Manny go into the other room where you can have a private conversation. Manny?"

He stood up and followed us to a small room with a large NO SMOKING sign on the wall. I glanced at Richard, who shrugged, but in a few moments there was a knock on the door and an officer delivered an ashtray to me.

Having placed most of my irritation on the head of the turncoat Rob, I felt sorry for Manny and, as I began speaking to him quietly, persuasively, I was confident that I would, as I always had, get through to him. But no matter from what angle I approached him, no matter how I tried to undo the knots, Manny only repeated, over and over as though he had rehearsed his big sentence in the school play, "I can't go home anymore."

I cajoled. I empathized. I questioned. I was gentle. I was stern. Still nothing but the flat voice. "I can't go home anymore."

Not all our confrontations over squandered money, petty thefts, routine lies, or failures in judgment had prepared me to deal with this implacable stranger.

The boy across the table was not simply a sulky kid, a thwarted adolescent determined to make his point. He was

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clenching and unclenching his fists, grinding his knuckles into his forehead. His words came out on shallow, painful breaths. Manny was suffering.

In the moment before I spoke again, my emotions assailed me in a chaos that belonged to certain troubled dream states. I was incredibly sad. And frustrated. And furious that such a trivial event had precipitated this bizarre tableau.

My voice, when it escaped, was as measured as I could manage. "Manny, when you make your decisions, remember that Charter and I love you."

I stepped out of that room, which had filled with smoke, and asked the Chief to join us. "Richard," I said, as much to Manny as to him, "Manny seems determined to leave home."

Richard sat down and leaned against Manny's hunched shoulder. "All I want to say is that I know your parents pretty well. Now Charter, he can be a difficult person now and then, but he's a good guy and I'm sure that the both of you can patch up your differences."

No response.

"All kids have problems with their parents from time to time. You might want to think about getting this straightened out."

Still nothing.

Richard and I looked at each other and I turned my palms up. "OK Manny. Do what you need to do, but I'm going to have to take the truck."

He fished the keys out of his pocket and handed them to me

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without looking up.

"I'm going to lock it up and leave it here for now. Is there anything you need out of it?"

"The radio." It had been his favorite Christmas present.

"I'm afraid the radio goes with the truck." The impulse to giggle was almost too much. I hugged him again and got a long hug back.

"Manny," Richard said. Do you think that you need us in order for you to get your things?"

Manny shook his head.

"Good."

Passing by the visibly confused Rob, I marched out to the parking lot, locked the dented pickup and drove home, relishing visions of two stranded teenagers hitchhiking to Rochester.

"Manny has been captured by a white trash cult." I described my afternoon to Charter. Though he was distressed to learn that Manny had convinced himself that his father was an abusive monster, Charter took his characteristic long view with a certainty that was part Zen, part experience and part his brother-in-law George's unfailing credo: things will unfold as they should. I was calming down.

Around 5 o'clock, Manny showed up. "I've come to get my stuff."

"How did you get here?" I asked.

"Rob and them. They're waiting for me by the mailboxes."

Wise not to show your faces here, I thought. And to Manny,

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"Fine. Get your stuff." Charter and I made a show of returning to our work and Manny disappeared up to his room and turned on his radio. His familiar sing-along voice was accompanied by the scrape of drawers being opened and closed, opened and closed.

Half an hour passed. An hour. And still the music and the drawers. Normally, I'd have been calling up to him, "Manny, your friends are waiting. Hurry up." But not that evening. Another hour. I hoped that 'Rob and them' were going crazy at the end of the road wondering what had become of their runaway.

Finally, close to 7:30, Manny reappeared, lugging two suitcases and his red string laundry bag, and the stuffed Tasmanian devil Charity had given him for his birthday. He seemed positively cheery.

"Bye, Marie. Bye, Chart." As though he were off to 4-H camp or Outward Bound or a holiday in British Columbia. More hugs. And smiles.

"You know, Charter," I remarked after Manny had hauled his belongings in three trips out to the yard, "I don't think he sees this as a crisis anymore."

Charter laughed. "It's the Manny Factor. Well, I suppose we should be proud of him for asserting himself and acting on his own. It might be good for him to experience the results of his decisions. But, considering the company he's keeping, there's something we need to do." Charter took the green passbook with its record of Manny's savings--almost \$700--from the file cabinet. He walked over to the simmering cookstove, lifted the lid, and tossed the book onto the coals. "No need to subsidize

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this adventure, would you agree?"

"Completely. Now, would you be so kind as to make us some dinner? I'm starving and exhausted."

Things unfolded as they should. Until, for the third time in as many days, the law arrived in our lives, specifically in our driveway at 9:45, complete with blue flashing lights and accompanied by a beat-up domestic vehicle of uncertain lineage.

"I'm losing my sense of humor." Charter opened the door to Officer Ouillette. "Can we help you?"

"Your boy here wants to get his radio and his bank book."

Both of turned to our boy and said in unison, "Manny Weeks!"

I put both hands on his shoulders and looked right at him.

"Since when did you need a policeman in order to enter your own house?"

Manny, to his credit, looked ashamed. Officer Ouillette looked confused.

"Can I speak to you a moment?" Charter guided the Barrington police officer onto the porch. When they returned, Manny was standing in the livingroom with his radio.

"Well so long," I said. Manny hesitated.

"My bank book," he was almost whispering.

"It's gone." I counted on his not asking me where.

"Oh."

"Goodby, Manny." Enough was enough.

Officer Ouillette handed Charter his card. Charter apologized for the inconvenience. Later that week he sent the

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Police Department a check. To cover, he told me, their time. "It's not their job to babysit teenagers who've figured out how to push the system's buttons."

The following week passed in a kaleidoscopic fashion, each segment of our days backlit by the smouldering fire Manny and his companions were fanning.

Aside from having to prepare a presentation for our new Boston client, finish the documentation we needed to bring to Mary, our Creative Tax Consultant, defrost a turkey for our Easter dinner with visiting friends from the Nicaragua trip, I felt I needed to re-structure the terms of the trust we'd set up for Manny in the event of our demise.

I had visions of family court: lawyers representing our wayward son, White Trash Cult members testifying that Manny had been wronged and abused. I imagined (not without reason, as it turned out), that people were after Manny for his money. What his companions knew was that Manny had a savings account. What they didn't know, but what I was afraid someone could find out, was that Manny had a substantial fund that we'd set up for his future needs. I thought trust funds were sacred; I was informed, when I investigated the matter, that 21 year olds had access to them.

Charter and our lawyer were of the opinion that I was overreacting. I overreacted anyway, fueled by adrenalin and outrage. I made sure, with the help of our extraordinary financial advisor who empathized with my concern, my panic, that

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the subsidy we'd received from the State of Massachusetts as compensation for dealing with one of their hard-to-adopt kids would be redirected into an untouchable vehicle.

I might have wanted to strangle Manny with my bare hands, but I certainly didn't intend his patrimony to fall into clutches we hadn't personally designated.

It was a long week.

Manny called on Easter Sunday from Skip's house. "Just wanted to say Happy Easter," he said. "Are you two having a good time?"

"Happy Easter, Manny. We're having a great time." I purposely didn't ask him what he was doing.

"You know, " I said to Linda and Bob and Doug as we finished our second helping of turkey and squash, "it's my turn. I'm fed fucking up." And I cried.

Charter reached over and massaged my neck. "It's OK, hon. You get to be fed up. It's OK."

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(The year or so Manny lived in an apartment, first with José, then with various roommates. The story of José's arrival full-time in our lives. The reappearance of Lenya. etc.)

(this section needs revision, filling out)

As Charter ushered the last hanger-on out the door and locked the apartment behind him, Shameel said, "I hate to say this, man, but you're doing the right thing."

I was waiting in the car; Manny slumped in the back seat, sniffing. It was after midnight when we got back to Barrington. Manny climbed upstairs to his old room, where framed paintings had replaced his posters of fast cars and soaring basketball players, and went immediately to sleep. Charter and I stayed up another hour, trying to absorb the fact that Manny was once again under our roof.

47B Ham Street, Dover. A two bedroom apartment on the second and third floors of a frame house in a shabby neighborhood. The houses are mainly multiple family dwellings, their unkempt yards littered with automobile parts, broken bicycles, and chained dogs barking sporadically under limp trees. Up the block, The Busy Hill Market serves the immediate needs of the neighborhood, providing beer, cigarettes, snack food and a few shelves of canned vegetables and boxes of dry cereal. There's often a small line at the public phone by the front steps. There is a laundromat at the other end of the street, and it's only a few blocks' walk to the center of town.

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At first, with his brother as a roommate, Manny had kept a tidy house. Every morning, José got up early to take Manny to work at the greenhouses of Elliott Rose Company, then drove the white pick-up around town, ostensibly looking for work.

(Here the story of Manny's two years in the apt. His falling out with his brother. Jos+ and Sara and their baby-to-be. The parade of kids who began to use the place as their home-away-from-whenever. Manny's job sagas. The neighbors. Justin, the landlord. The gradual deterioration of everything.)

On a frigid Wednesday night in February, we shut the show down. The landlord had called earlier in the day to let us know he'd had yet another complaint about loud music at 2 a.m. "I went over there today and read Manny the riot act. All the kids who were there got to hear it, too." Justin sounded more concerned than angry. "I see different faces every time I drop in. Who's living there...officially?"

"God, Justin, I don't know. It's supposed to be just Manny and Skip, but I think Skip's left and Lamont has taken up residence. I'll get on their case this week. Sorry for the inconvenience."

And then, past 10:00, Skip phoned. "Marie, I just want to let you know I've moved out."

"I thought so. And where's the \$150 you owe us for rent?"

"I gave it to Manny last week to give to you."

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"Skip, either you're lying to me or you're stupider than I would have believed possible."

That part of our conversation continued briefly, going nowhere.

"The reason I called, " he continued when I dropped the money issue, "is because you ought to know that there's bad stuff going down at the apartment."

It wasn't news. It wasn't even that the situation was any worse on that Wednesday night than it had been for months.

Manny loved the independence he enjoyed at 47B. He had become something of a star to the teenaged girls and unemployed young men who daily and nightly streamed in and out of his home. He was old enough to buy beers. He had his own wheels. He never said no to anyone, whether the request was for a place to crash, the loan of his bike, a room to party in. And kids genuinely liked him. He was still the gentle, accepting boy he'd always been.

He wanted a real girlfriend, was sure he'd find one at the Saturday dance, held at a club that he went to faithfully, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that it permitted no alcohol.

I remember one Sunday he called to say he'd found one, a girlfriend just for him, as though she'd been somehow lost all this time.

"What's her name?" I'd long since gotten into the habit of asking Manny that about any new friend, male or female, because

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it always seemed to be a detail he neglected to discover.

After a moment of thought, he replied, "It begins with 'P'."

The friends who began to worry--that he'd started drinking every night, that he wasn't looking for work, that the pots and dishes and clothes went longer without a washing--and call him on it...those friends found themselves unwelcome. Manny quietly shut them out.

Sometimes Charter and I saw it. Sometimes the kids told us themselves. Jos⁺ called more and more frequently.

"The girl who lives across the street sees lots of kids driving the truck. There was a big party two nights ago. The cops came."

We talked to Manny. We laid out one game plan after another. Go to Unemployment. There's a woman there named Diane who'll help you. Fill out applications. No kids in the house after 10:00 at night. No job, no truck. We're paying for your life right now, but you're going to have to start contributing.

Each time, Manny made just enough progress to keep us believing he'd gotten the deal.

He had not gotten the deal. He wasn't about to get the deal. He had a roof over his head. Heat. Lights. Even food that Charter and he shopped for every other weekend. And he had 47B.

"Marie, it's 11:00 at night. Don't you think we might do this tomorrow?"

"Look at it this way. Tomorrow needs us to do business. What are we doing tonight?"

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Charter turned off the evening news and put on his black parka. "You have a point."

We drove the twenty minutes to Dover over roads heaved by frost and studded with icy mounds of leftover snow. When we pulled into the driveway on Ham Street, the house windows were shrouded with blankets, lit from behind.

It was as if they'd expected us. We knocked. Manny came down. By the time we got up to the livingroom, Lamont was shrugging on his jacket.

"Goodnight, Lamont," Charter said pleasantly. "You can come by tomorrow and pick up your stuff."

"Goodnight." Lamont left like the last guest at a dinner party, reluctant but resigned.

Remembering the disaster of two years ago when removing Manny from his temporary lair involved more cops than we ever wanted to encounter again, I put my arm around Manny's shoulders and said, "We're going home now." Manny said, "Right." We walked out to the waiting car.

It took Charter another few minutes to discover and evict the seven boys hiding in Manny's bedroom. He was smiling as he drove us home.

"Shameel told you did the right thing?"

"Yeah. Nice to have your decisions approved of, eh?"

Thursday Manny packed up and cleaned his sink and his oven, the bedrooms and the bathroom. Jos⁺ came by.

"If I hadn'ta been there," he told me when he called,

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"nothing would've got done. Those kids kept coming up, but they left when I told them they had to help." He seemed relieved. We had finally done what he wanted us to do.

Friday Charter brought Jack's truck to pick up the bed and the couch and the bureau. The boxes and bags took a second trip. Manny gave the food to the people in the back apartment.

We stored everything in the Community House. Manny's belongings took up a fair amount more space than the cardboard box he first brought to our home when he was fourteen and alone.

"It's good to see Barrington again." That's what Charter told me he'd said on the first trip back, as though he hadn't been here every weekend, as though he were returning from a very long trip.

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(Summers, school vacations)

This Chapter will include versions of the following (with transitions and more material on soccer camp, Outward Bound, etc. The solo trip to British Columbia is printed in its entirety here, but I will most certainly shorten it, using only excerpts from our letters dealing with the authorities)

On the surface it might simply have been the prospect of another New Hampshire winter that prompted me to book a flight to Puerto Rico. Underneath I was yearning for the kind of family holiday that gathered grown children out of their far flung lives and brought us together for a moment.

Most Christmas vacations had found Bill and Sebastian off with their father and grandparents-in-England; and us slivering the holidays like candied almonds among Charter's mother, his father and Connie, my folks in Vermont.

This time we'd all go south together: Charter, who'd never officially vacationed to somewhere in winter; Bill and Sebastian, who hadn't spent a January with us away from woodstoves and catch-up dentist appointments; Manny, who had no memory of the island of his birth; and me. A four hour plane ride and a one hour car trip was all that stood between our icy birches and the tropical palms that bent away from a purple sky. Aside from buying a guide book and a map, I had no firm commitment to an itinerary.

All the tedium of air travel--the crush at the gate, the

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cramped seats and the plastic-wrapped meals--took on a fresh aspect as I watched Manny enjoy every moment, while his brothers retreated into their travel modes: Sebastian with his head in a book, Bill sketching his surroundings.

"Marie, look." Manny pointed to a picture on the back of the in-flight magazine.

"What does it say?"

"The Shining Star of the Caribbean. That's my flag."

And, of the harried stewardess, "Marie, she's talking Spanish."

Where was I born? What is it like there? I was born in Puerto Rico. it has poum trees alloever the plaes. and it was sun and the beches wher salty and the witter was warm and it had a lout of brieds on the beches and tree. and it had poum trees...
From his window seat, he strained to see the shadow of our plane on clotted clouds beneath the wing. And he might have been the only passenger on that flight who genuinely relished his compartmentalized lunch. He ate everything.

Arriving in San Juan in mid-afternoon, we rented a car and headed away from the city to Luquillo, the nearest small town with a *parador* and a beach.

We stowed our bags in whitewashed rooms, changed into suits and walked in the soft sand, past driftwood and scuttling lizards, to the edge of a pale and warm Atlantic. Small waves landed on the strip of shore in precise ranks. We splashed in, shouting like children. Bill swam around us underwater, one elbow breaking the surface like a shark fin. Sebastian and Charter rode the waves on their bellies, tumbling in the surf,

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gulping air, swallowing salt water. It was delicious to be neck deep in the ocean in January.

The little streets of Luquillo were all but deserted on that weeknight between Christmas and tourist season. Around us invisible frogs, *coquis*, chirped their naturally perfect sevenths and black birds crowded the trees, singing. At the restaurant, we ordered pork and shared a platter of *tostones*.

Light left the sky in washes of violet and gray; night came gently to the terrace of the *parador*. Charter and I sipped Corona beer and red wine in companionable silence, phantom curls of smoke (we hadn't had a cigarette for three months) eddying up to the window where our boys slept behind louvered blinds. We could almost hear their breathing.

Our first morning in Puerto Rico began at an outdoor table set with bowls of fruit and pitchers of fresh pineapple juice. After breakfast, I spread my map on the tiles.

"El Yunque. The rainforest. It's right near here. Shall we?" The band seemed amenable so we set out up the winding road to the summit, me watching for the fabled native parrot, Charter negotiating switchbacks fretted with clumps of wild pink *impatiens*. Manny spotted three hawks wheeling over a lookout tower.

We parked and hiked into a damp and echoing world of waterfalls and giant ferns. There was a profusion of flowering hibiscus and bromeliads, unfamiliar trees, cries of strange birds, subtle scents. I wandered aimlessly, following little streams. Charter took photos. One shows Manny, a solitary figure

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in a red shirt against a deep green background. Another catches Bill and Sebastian scaling a rock fall. I'm sure the climb was a race.

A wind cooled the balcony where we sipped fruit drinks over lunch. From that height the land swept away over ridges of dark green mountains to lime green squares of cultivation to the aquamarine sea, over coffee plantations to the pineapple and cane fields on the coast.

We left the forest and drove westward, through wild hills studded with orange-flowering "flamboyant" trees, south to the city of Ponce, where artisans make fantastical masks called *veigantes*. The traffic downtown was thick and loud; the plaza baked in the sun. A Burger King and a pink cathedral offered the only respite. We didn't stay long. By late afternoon we'd arrived in San Germ-n.

The *parador* "Oasis" stood in the center of town. Shuttered houses lined the winding streets like stern *duenas*. From our hotel window we could see a church tower with clay bells that hung like a brace of inverted flowerpots. The boys napped. Charter and I walked into a square where a wedding party was spilling from the church, down shallow stone steps, into a phalanx of black-clad motorcyclists who escorted the entourage away in a tornado of sound and flashing color. Later, Charter made a snapshot for my father: me standing below a street sign that read *Avenida Doctor Harris*.

Dr. Harris. In my memories of family holidays, he is absent, working, like the other fathers. We children got herded into

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station wagons and shipped to the seashore, content with mothers and aunts. Once in a while all of us went on a real trip together, until we were too many. Everything changed when Dad began to drink, but by then I had moved away.

Travel with my first husband amounted to an unhappy series of whispered arguments in hotel rooms. Then the divorce fractured vacations into visitations; the boys were dispatched from one coast to the other, dissolving their comfortable world of cousins and grandparents. When Charter came into my life, I began trying to reassemble the picture with its new parts. So here we were, a makeshift family on a family trip.

I'd abandoned all other reading for my out-island guide book. I loved searching its enthusiastic paragraphs; it was like turning the pages of a leather bound wine list in a restaurant with a fine collection.

In matters of wine and of itinerary, Charter had always been the ideal companion. He deferred to my every whim, waited for the presentation, then gave himself over to enjoying the choice. Thus I was always free to indulge both my passion for research and his wish to avoid decisions in favor of the pleasures of the unexpected.

The kids either didn't care which beach we ended up on or, more likely, tacitly acknowledged the reality: that this vacation was not of their making and they'd have to find their own amusements within it.

We drove by old churches and opulent *haciendas* built by 19th century coffee barons; followed curving mountain roads past

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turquoise cement block houses with plumes of garbage spilling like surf down the banks behind their yards; skirted coves and salt flats and fishing villages where white egrets stalked watery margins and gathered in the wake of lean white cows grazing in parched fields. The land turned to mesquite and cactus. Rickety one-room shacks tottered on stilts among motionless windmills. At the Mayag^{uez} Zoo, we watched monkeys and polar bears and enormous rodents. Every day we ate fish-filled *empanadillas* and drank *Malta* from cans.

"We're headed to Rinc^{ón}. We've gone there for years," said the genial man waiting for his wife in front of a public bathhouse in Paraguera. He described a village with long empty beaches and spectacular surf.

And Villa Antonio: a collection of one and two story buildings gathered around a small yard ringed by rattling palms. The beach and an aqua sea were the only luxuries. We set up housekeeping in a two bedroom apartment, hanging damp suits and towels over the balcony, stocking the fridge with pineapples and guavas.

Bill bought white glue and construction paper in the market for his torn paper collages of red boats, black palms and orange clouds. Sebastian read and played "Kadima" with Manny on the beach. Charter finished an entire novel, lying on his stomach in the sand. We all ate conch on the deck of the Black Eagle Restaurant and watched a burnished sun set into pink clouds on the brink of the sea.

Yes. It was exactly as I'd imagined it.

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Yet, though Bill and Sebastian attended to their brother, including him in their forays to the surfing beach and local hangouts, and Charter took time to listen to his discourses on birds and fish, Manny's essential isolation was complete and quiescent. They understood that far better than I, with my intricate scenarios. Manny remained an outsider, a child without a country or a family of his own. Still, this island, this family seemed fine with him. He genuinely appreciated what attention came his way. He liked his new brothers, his new parents. He liked anyone who'd talk to him.

"Si," he replied to the drunk beside him at the bar who was clearly convinced that Manny's mother wanted nothing more than to dance with him.

That Charter and I were Manny's parents now, that he had acquired two extra brothers, that none of us looked like him, that he spoke no Spanish and only a slow and spare English, that he had been deposited among chronic talkers, must have been puzzling to this fifteen-year-old visiting what he was told was the country and culture of his birth. Or perhaps Manny might simply have felt he was on vacation.

...and i saw a wael in the witter when i was on the beche and ther wher pellancans flying alloever the trees and diving for fishes to eat becus they did not have food at all.

He loved Puerto Rico. He talked about it a lot in school when he returned. Priscilla told me his classmates needed to know:

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"Did you meet any girls?"

"No, I couldn't. They were all Spanish!"

What do I really know?

Of course I saw that holiday through the sunglasses of my own need: husband and wife having a wonderful time; boys having wonderful times of their own; souvenirs and snapshots; no fights; sand in the seams of our bathingsuits.

As I put the new pictures in the album, it occurred to me that photo albums only record the happy times. I have books filled with years of photographs held with brittle tape that curls away from the pages. Chapel Hill. Aurora. Ithaca. Portsmouth. Barnstead. Barrington. I love to pull them out and reconstruct a past from images of lawns and porches, dogs, basketball nets and bikes, beaches.

One fall afternoon, as I was showing Sebastian a batch of photos of him and Bill at the Bronx Zoo--they were wearing little wool coats handed down from my brothers, there was a camel and an elephant--he said to me, "I don't remember anything about my childhood," I cried. And would not be consoled.

(1986)

The fair comes to Rochester in late September while the days are still warm and the last of summer's breezes tease the night air. The fairgrounds sprawl over 100 acres in the midst of a

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shabby neighborhood near the neglected buildings on Main Street. What was once a thriving shoe factory town with its own opera house is now a city struggling to survive the devastating economic upheavals that began in the late sixties. Yet some traditions persist, and the fair is one of them.

The Rochester Fair isn't as old timey as the ones in Deerfield and Sandwich, but I love it for its particular mixture of farm exhibits and honkey tonk. For two weeks people throng the long gray exhibit sheds, the rides, the food stands and games of chance, the harness racing track.

"I was thinking," Manny began, as he finished his after school yogurt and juice, "about the Rochester Fair." Manny usually edged cautiously into any subject that involved permission or money.

"Josh and them are probably going tonight."

"Oh?" I looked up from my papers. "That's nice. Josh and who?"

"And David. And some kids from school will be there." Manny had rinsed his glass at the sink and was looking out the kitchen window, his back to me. "I was thinking about going."

"Do you have any homework?"

"I finished it in Resource Room."

"Do you have any money?"

"In my bank book I do."

"Well, I think that would be OK as long as you're not out too late. Why don't you ride your bike uptown and take \$10 out of your savings."

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"I will do that, Mom." Though most of Manny's summer money was earmarked for his ski weekends, I didn't see any harm in his using some of it for the fair.

He called Josh. He put the green passbook and a yellow withdrawal slip into his back pocket and patted my head on his way to the door. "See you shortly," he said, just the way, I realized with a start of pleasure, Charter always did when he left the house.

Josh and David arrived as Charter and I were eating dinner. Manny came downstairs wearing his black parachute pants, a short sleeved red shirt and a bandana tied around his head.

"Hey, Man."

"OK, guys," said Charter. "Have fun. Be home by ten." He pulled out a five dollar bill and handed it to Manny. "Have one of those sausage and pepper subs for me."

"Thanks, Chart."

Usually we found time to visit the fair ourselves, if only so Charter could add to his photographic record of New Hampshire at play. He has collected wonderful shots of the tattooed bikers who yearly congregate at Weirs Beach; and the small tent circus that comes every August to a meadow near Dover's County Home; the pit crews at the Lee Speedway; horse pulls at the Barrington ballfield.

By day the Rochester Fair offered up cages of prize roosters and ducks, 4-H-ers napping on hay bales beside their lambs or heifers. Groomed sheep nudging each other in pens, Heavy-uddered cows standing stuck in stalls; from a loudspeaker mounted on a

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painted trailer, a voice announcing the next running of Robinson's Racing Pigs.

We'd wander a labyrinth of aisles and booths in the exhibit buildings, dutifully admiring all manner of handicraft and garden bounty. There were quilts and pumpkins, pickles and jams, oil paintings of covered bridges and seascapes done in water color. There were bunches of perfect beets, mounds of squash and gourds in antic shapes, heavy hooked rugs, woodwork, metalwork, maple syrup, glistening combs of honey and shelves of baked goods. Blue and red and yellow and white rosettes decorated the biggest, the sweetest, the prettiest, the best.

"Our zucchinis look this good," I'd say to Charter. And, "We grew terrific broccolis this year. We could have entered them. Your bread and butter pickles would have won first prize." It was a game. We'd cruise the show as if we had been competitors, weighing our melons, judging our bright simmered jams.

Evening at the fair was for holding hands under the winking lights of the ferris wheel, the spinning silver bullets and tumbling wire baskets filled with shrieking adolescents. I could relive from the safe ground the terror that used to propel me on wild rides into cockeyed sky without ever again having to prove my courage to a boyfriend or allow myself to be cajoled by children onto machines called The Octopus or The Hurricane.

Charter and I would walk together, amidst teenaged lovers and couples pushing baby vehicles, through the fractured carnival music and soft smells of pizza and donuts and green peppers, to the racetrack where we'd put two dollars to win on a

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trotting horse with a great name and watch it nose out the fourth place finisher. Every year, as we left the fairgrounds, the same blind man was playing his accordian at the gate.

Manny came home on time that Tuesday. He showed us the baseball cap he'd won on the ring toss, and the two miniature Snoopy dolls from the roulette game.

The following afternoon, after Manny'd filled in his grammar sheets and I'd checked his math, he asked again if he could go to the fair. And again he rode to the bank. He was excited when he came home that night.

"Look what I won this time!" He had a large bright pink bear under one arm and a framed poster of a white Corvette under the other.

"I'm giving this to Ben. Babies like stuffed animals. And this," he presented me with the poster, "is for you. Cause you and Chart drive Corvettes."

"Wow, Manny. How did you win these?"

He couldn't remember if it was the dart board with the balloons or the rifles and the ducks. "Maybe it was the basketball game."

"And did you go on any rides?" asked Charter. "Did you eat fried dough?" Manny was vague on the details.

"I had a real fun time. Can I go tomorrow?"

"I think that's enough for this week," Charter answered.

"You can go on Saturday for the last day."

By the end of the weekend, Manny had bestowed another garish bear and both Snoopys on Ben, given Wim and Jonell a Rochester

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Fair mug, and had motorcycle posters for himself and Nick.

When Joyce came by on Sunday to deliver a dozen eggs, she was laughing. "You should have seen Manny's face when he gave those animals to Ben. He looked so proud of himself!"

On Monday I went up to Manny's room to collect enough dirty clothes to finish off a load of wash. His bank book was lying on the drawing table. I glanced through the pages.

"Oh my God. Charter!" The little gray numbers followed each other in a neat column down the page. \$10. \$60. \$25. \$90. In total, almost \$400 had been withdrawn over the course of five days. Manny had all but cleaned out his entire summer's savings.

"But how?" Charter kept adding the figures. "It's not possible, is it?"

I dreaded the process of finding out the answer to that question almost more than the answer itself. The two of us waiting in our chairs at the table. Manny coming through the door, bookbag slung over his shoulder, happy face.

"Hi Mom and Dad. How was your day?"

Manny, sit down. Manny, here's your bank book. What's your explanation?

Manny. Collapsed in the chair, head down, shoulders bowed under the parental onslaught. Manny on trial.

Having admitted to taking those sums from his savings, he could not, no matter how many times we asked, account for the money.

His patience was, as usual, far greater than mine. My voice grew louder, my words harsher. I sat back in the chair. "Manny,"

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I said quietly. "I want you to go up to your room for fifteen minutes. I want you to think very hard about where all that money went. Then I want you to come downstairs and tell us the truth."

He came down. We asked him again. Chin still on his chest, he said in a whisper, "I bought marijuana."

Well that, I said to myself, makes more sense. "From whom, Manny?"

"From Josh and Dave."

My anger returned. I reached for the phone and called both boys, telling each to get his tail to our house.

"Tell them, Manny," Charter said when the boys arrived. And Manny repeated what he said to us.

"Absolutely not true! Manny, look at me!" Josh was stunned. "Manny, have Dave or I ever sold you dope?"

Manny didn't answer or look at his friends.

"Manny." Dave asked the question again.

"No." Manny's voice was tiny.

"What?"

"No!" And he began to cry.

That night, after the furor had died down and Manny was in bed, we tried to piece together a version of the events. Working with a calculator, we listed the possibilities. Food. And food for friends. Rides and rides for friends. Twenty dollar bills handed to hot dog vendors, the change stuffed away uncounted. And games. Hours of games.

"I guess he really could have dropped \$400," Charter

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concluded wearily. "And he must have felt like a king."

Summer: 1985

June 24, 1985

Dear Annie:

At last we've started the new bedroom. Charter has designed a space off the downstairs closet just large enough for a bed and some built-in drawers. The way the house is sited, with those enormous rocks on the north side and the drop-off, it's our only choice. It'll sit on cement piers (Manny's digging the holes, bless him. Thank God for teenagers with strong backs) and when it's done, it'll look as if it had always been here. Charter's architectural sense is really amazing considering he has had zero training. And each addition gets a little classier! Bill and Sebastian are here for the summer again. I love it. They're both living in Portsmouth and we all hang out together a lot. Weekends Charter presses them into service banging nails and working in the garden.

Annie, am I terrible to compare Manny's slow, often uncomprehending self to my other two boys? Will there come a time when Manny will be fun? Does it matter?

It's obvious, though, that Bill and Bash spark their new brother. When Bill's around, Manny makes the most extraordinary watercolors. You know, if all the art he produced resulted from school classes, you'd never know what a gift he has. He happily completes assignments that end up looking tortured and unimaginative. But when he paints with Bill--the two of them chatting and listening to reggae--his brush creates still lifes worthy of Monet (Manny's favorite painter). I'll send you the next one he does. You won't believe it.

Bill takes him to Friendly's for shakes and he shoots baskets in the yard with Bash. Well, I've sensed it for years, ever since my divorce: in the long run, sibling relationships are the ones that really count. Do you think I could hire B & B to stay here as professional brothers?

Charter and I are going on our first vacation since Manny arrived. We'll spend a week in Qu⁺béc City while Manny goes to 4-H camp. I can't wait.

Thanks for your long letter. When will we see each other?

Love to George and the kids. Tell Julian The Godmother is beginning to shop for his birthday.

ls 2

The singular twilight din of spring peepers had given way to the velvet crush of early summer sounds. Honey bees gossiped in quince blossoms like teenagers at a prom. Phoebes worried the eaves and overhangs, started nests that would soon erupt in dawn cacophonies outside our bedroom window. The swamp maples

YOUR SUN, MANNY
CHAPTER 8

reddened and slowed the wind to a sigh. Golden-eyed frogs had returned to the little fish pond in Charter's Japanese garden where they belched contentedly among the stones and sprouting arrow weed.

We walked back home from a Sunday morning visit, through transparent veils of mayflies, past sudden bursts of painted trillium, inhaling the admixture of damp leaves and pine pitch peculiar to that time of year, listening to jays and towhees competing for airtime. We heard the laughter of children and went toward the sound.

As we approached, we could separate the skein of voices into the individual threads of Manny, little Ben and Jason. Their happy shouts had a rhythm, like cheers.

Smiling, full of the kind of romantic flush that June encourages, we encountered the happy boys...

...just as the frog completed its splayed arc and was hurtling downward, like a circus acrobat who'd missed the bar, into the shimmering algae net of the fish pond.

Manny retrieved the twitching creature and, to the delight of his pre-school audience, lofted it back into the sky.

I was a frozen spectator unable to comprehend the terrible reality of what was playing itself out before me. It was Charter who turned, strode to the shed, brought out the long-handled spade and handed it to Manny.

"Kill it."

(1986)

Was it Charter or I who hit upon the solution to the problem of summer employment for Manny? We'd been discussing the matter since May; it seemed important that he begin earning his own spending money. But helping Manny find a job wasn't going to be easy. He had no skills to speak of, no transportation except us and his blue ten-speed.

At 15, Sebastian had spent a miserable summer on the night shift at the Gateway Restaurant washing dishes. We drove the eight miles to pick him up at midnight. We weren't about to repeat that experience, and the Gateway had filled its day jobs. Bill had cleaned equipment for a local well-driller, but the work was too dangerous for Manny. Our small town didn't offer much in the way of jobs for kids.

"Rochester Gardens!" One of us had the brainstorm.

Dan Tuttle's greenhouse and shop was only two miles up the highway from the end of Scruton Pond Road. At this time of year there would likely be dozens of tasks that Manny could be taught to do.

"But Dan probably doesn't want to pay to train someone just for the summer," Charter said.

"Then let's pay him." I was devising a plan. "We don't use the Massachusetts adoption subsidy on clothes or food...why don't we spend some of it on job training? Dan could give Manny an hourly wage and we could pay him back. Dan gets free labor and Manny gets a job that might actually develop into

YOUR SUN, MANNY
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something."

Charter was warming to the idea. "It beats washing dishes. I wonder if Dan will go for it?"

He didn't at first. "It doesn't seem right, you paying me to hire someone." We stood on his front step in the bright June morning surrounded by flats of perennials, pots of peach azaleas and juniper trees balled in wet canvas. Behind him, plastic-sheathed greenhouses were filled with rows of started seedlings. "I could use the help..."

"I know it sounds somewhat, uh, unusual," Charter said, "It does to us, too. However, faced with this situation, it began to look almost logical to us. You need help; Manny needs work; Massachusetts has given us a grant."

"Well, if you put it that way." And Manny started work that weekend. When school let out, he rode his bike up the road five days a week. His tasks included weeding, transplanting, doing odd jobs.

At the end of each pay period, Dan gave Manny a check and a detailed accounting of hours worked, lunch breaks and deductions for "Dr. Pepper and other soda."

Manny opened a bank account and we earmarked a good chunk of his money for skiing so he'd have something to look forward to; I was of the opinion that saving ought to have a spending component.

July 18, 1985

Dear Annie:

Yes, I'm writing again. With Manny gone 6 or 7 hours a day, I finally have some time and emotional space to rummage around in the attic where my poems come from. The Monday workshops at Skimmilk Farm prod me to have something to bring each week. I need that kind of pressure these days.

We get two views of Manny's week, one from Dan and one from him. I think Dan's a little frustrated at how slowly Manny works (join the group!) and how much one-on-one he needs, but overall, he seems pleased. I'm sure his natural patience is lengthened by the fact that Manny's notion of time isn't tied to an hourly wage.

Meanwhile, the boy perceives himself as doing a great job. He's quite chatty when he gets home, tells us about planting flowers and digging trenches and watering. He loves it when Dan lets him use the riding mower. Sometimes we get a hint of Dan's exasperation from Manny's perspective. He'll say something like "Dan was a little tired today." Or "I helped Dan's wife with the kids." I think this translates as "Dan lost his temper at me." Or "I wasn't doing a job correctly so Dan sent me to hang out with his children for a while."

Anyhow, I can't believe it's going as smoothly as it is. Dan

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Tuttle will never have to spend a moment in Purgatory!

Manny goes to 4-H camp at the end of August. When do you leave for Kirsten's skating camp? Call before you take off.

Love,

(British Columbia)

February 3, 1989

Dear Annie:

Manny's so looking forward to his trip! He's already planning what to bring, fussing over his ski equipment, telling his teachers and his friends that he's going to visit his Canadian cousins. He can even find Fernie on the map! I'm really jealous (unless I let myself believe that CW and I are really going back to Puerto Rico in March) and I'll miss seeing you. This project we're working on for NET has both of us right out straight.

I hope the fact that Anna and Xavier will be in school won't make things difficult for you. You're such a sweetie to make room in your life for Manny. I think it's very important that he feel a connection to our family. He was really tuned in to Dad...I wonder how he's processing his grandfather's death...and, of course, Mom. But your kids are the only cousins who've made a connection. I still have those wonderful letters Kirsten and Anna wrote to him when he first arrived. As a matter of fact, I'll enclose copies in case you never read them.

Speaking of Kirsten, it's fantastic that she'll hook up with him in Toronto. There's no way she can help him on his Boston to Toronto leg, but at least he'll have company for the longest part of the trip. I'm not too worried, though, given that he successfully (well, almost) negotiated the wilds of the Minneapolis airport last summer.

Anyhow, we'll be talking on the phone before he leaves. Thanks again!

Love,

Maz

November 27, 1985

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expensive

(please excuse my very
writing paper)

Dear Manny:

Hi! I'm Kirsten. I'm 16 years old, 5' 6", 114 lbs and I live in Fernie, B.C., Canada. How are you? We've just received a letter from Maz and your picture. It sounds like you have a great life with Maz and Charter--aren't they excellent? How is school with you? Are you enjoying it; any specific subjects you really enjoy? I'm in grade 11 this year. I think it's the hardest year so far. I really like Algebra and Biology. Which sports do you enjoy? What position are you on the soccer team? We live in the Rocky Mountains here, so the skiing is really good. I really enjoy skating, volleyball, basketball and track. The weather here is extremely cold and half the school is sick. I got my drivers license last May, so winter driving is new to me. I haven't quite mastered it yet! What's your favorite TV show? I love "The Cosby Show." I think it's totally hilarious (sp). Which animals do you guys have out at your house? Who's your best friend? What's your favorite food? Have you met many other cousins yet? As you can see, there're lots of things I don't know about you yet! Write soon and fill me in! I hope to meet you soon.

Love Kirsten

P.S. Say hi to your mom, dad, Bill & Bash for me!

To Manny

Hi my name is Anna I am your 10 year old cousin. I am in grade 5 and I was born in Toronto. How are you I'm fine we just got our first report card and our school pictures. I saw your school picture

turn page

it's very nice. We live in a big house in Fernie and we have 1 female dog named Pepper. We have a farm by the river. Julian has a horse of his own out at the farm. I hope you have a nice Christmas. I wish I could meet you soon.

Love Anna

March 1, 1989

Senator Warren Rudman
275 Chestnut Street
Manchester, NH 03103

Dear Senator Rudman:

My wife and I are extremely disturbed by a recent encounter that our adopted son, Manny Weeks, had at US Immigration in Toronto, Canada as he returned from a visit with our relatives in British Columbia.

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We sent him, on his school break, with four identification documents: a copy of his birth certificate; a valid NH driver's license; a picture ID from Spaulding HS; and a Social Security card. All the information conforms from one document to the next. Manny is 18 years old, was born in Puerto Rico, is very dark complexioned, and mildly retarded.

While he had no difficulty entering Canada, the return trip was another matter. It took several hours after he got home, clearly upset, to piece together the story because Manny was sure he'd done something wrong and was afraid to tell us.

He was removed from the line by Immigration and taken to a cubicle. After providing all of his identification and explaining that he was returning from visiting his cousins in Fernie, BC, he was asked where he was born. He said, "Puerto Rico." He was asked where in Puerto Rico. This confused him because he was abandoned by his mother as a baby in Springfield, MA. So he said "Down South." ...The agent took this odd answer and demeanor to mean he was lying. So she said, "Were you born in San Juan?" He said yes and she replied, "Name some streets in San Juan." Manny was unable to do this so she said, "You're lying, aren't you?" At this point he became even more frightened and confused. A male person came into the room with more questions and Manny is uncertain about what happened next. He was under the impression that he had been held for about a half hour. He was finally released and allowed to continue his trip. Needless to say, he was panicked that he would miss his flight.

...My wife phoned US Customs & Immigration in Toronto and had a lengthy conversation with the shift supervisor, Mr. John Smarsh. He was very concerned and polite. He called us on the evening of the 27th to say he had spoken with the people who had interviewed our son. They claimed they had never accused him of lying or in any way intimidated him.... Mr. Smarsh pointed out that their job was to deny undocumented aliens entry into the United States and that the proof of no wrongdoing was the safe arrival of our son at Logan Airport. He also extended apologies for the disturbance. In spite of Mr. Smarsh's courteous behavior, my wife and I are still quite frankly outraged at the incident.

It seems evident that it is only because our son is young and black that his documentation was considered inadequate. If our country's policy is to have separate documentation requirements for black people, then it should be so stated. Secondly, if our Immigration personnel are being trained to frighten people as an interrogatory technique, then there are serious procedural implications which should be reviewed by Congress. Thirdly, if our Immigration personnel are so poorly trained as to be unable to distinguish a fully documented, frightened, slightly retarded American youth carrying skis and skates from the people they are actually screening, then we do not have a screening mechanism at all. Fourth, many parents--myself included--have taught our

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children that, in the event of difficulty, they should seek help from uniformed people. Our son has just been taught by representatives of the United States government that he can be expected to be called a liar and treated in a semi-Fascist manner by people in authority. For a kid like Manny, without the intellectual skills to understand what had just happened to him, it will be very hard to undo the harm that this incident has created... and we have no interest in some meaningless apology from an Immigration office bureaucrat.

We are in hopes that:

- 1: some reasonable standard will be established for documentation for entry into the United States from Canada and that the standard will be applied without regard to age, color, handicap, etc.
- 2: this incident will become a catalyst for establishing rules that prohibit intimidation of any applicant for entry into the United States;
- 3: that Immigration establish a training program to teach its agents about characteristics common to retarded and other handicapped persons;
- 4: that we receive copies of the documentation generated by our son's interrogation;
- 5: that to the extent possible, our Congressional office will be a pain in the neck to people at the Department of Immigration so that even more serious impingements of citizens' rights do not occur.

Thank you very much for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Charter Weeks

April 10, 1989

Mr. Charter Weeks
P.O. Box 203
Barrington, NH 03825

Dear Mr. Weeks:

Thank you for your recent letter

An inquiry was made on your behalf with the U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Buffalo, New York, and a copy of a letter from Mr. Benedict J. Ferro, District Director, is enclosed.

I hope this explanation is satisfactory. Please let me know if I can be of assistance with another matter in the future.

YOUR SUN, MANNY
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Sincerely,

Warren B. Rudman
United States Senator

WBR:ec
Enclosure

Apr 07 1989

Senator Warren B. Rudman
United States Senate
Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03801'Dear Senator Rudman:

Reference is made to your letter of March 15, 1989 in behalf of Charter Weeks concerning the immigration inspection experienced by his adoptive son, Manny Weeks at Toronto, Canada pre-flight inspection on February 27, 1989.

As a result of your letter we have conducted an inquiry into this matter which included obtaining reports of the inspection from the inspector involved and the supervisory staff at Toronto Airport.

Our records indicate that at the time of his application for admission to the United States that Manny Weeks was unaccompanied. He stated that he was a United States citizen and for identification presented a New Hampshire driver's license and a copy of a Puerto Rican birth certificate, which is a document notorious for being used to fraudulently claim United States citizenship. Since he was unable to answer some routine basic questions about his country of birth, although he claimed to have lived there for nine (9) years, he was referred to another inspector for additional questioning. This additional questioning lasted about ten (10) minutes, after which time the inspector was satisfied that Manny was a United States citizen and allowed him to proceed to his flight. Our passenger inspection log indicates that Manny was encountered at approximately 7:23AM and that his inspection was completed at 7:41AM, leaving him approximately twenty (20) minutes to make an 8:00AM departure.

The primary immigration inspector described Manny as a tall, high school-age young man who was unsure of some basic routine facts about his country of birth and therefore, required additional questioning. This is our normal operating procedure. Manny's race was not germane to the issue, only his lack of information about certain routine questions posed to him. Also, no thought was given to Manny being retarded since he had traveled back and forth across the continent alone and had a valid driver's license.

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Our review of this matter fails to reveal that our officers or supervisors acted in a racist manner, or that their actions were other than routine given the circumstances. Manny was not treated in a rude, discourteous or humiliating fashion. He was only questioned regarding inconsistencies of his responses to questions concerning his place of birth and citizenship. This line of questioning is required by our officers not only to prevent the entry of malafide applicants, but also to identify runaways or other minors ticketed for travel who should instead be intercepted and returned to their parents or appropriate social service agencies.

We sincerely regret the anxiety and discomfort experienced by Manny and his parents as a result of his inspection. We hope our response better clarifies for Mr. Weeks the events that occurred. In the future, should Manny have occasion to depart and return to the United States unaccompanied, it is suggested that he be provided with a letter from his parents briefly outlining his travel itinerary and other particulars, including a telephone number to call in the event a problem arises.

We hope the above information will be of assistance to you in responding to your constituent.

Very truly yours,

Benedict J. Ferro
District Director

Saturday, February 25

Dearest Maz and Charter,

I got the idea yesterday that it would be neat to send a letter home for you with Manny so that you would have a fresh account of our week with him. Because Manny is not the most effusive talker, you may never hear the half of what he's done, so I want to fill you in.

But first of all I want you to know that we're all so happy to have had the chance to get to know Manny and we love him very much. He's been considerate, helpful, honest, funny and a big surprise in many ways. More on the surprises later.

On Sat., Manny's first day here, I hardly saw him at all because Anna had figure skating out of town. So Kirsten took him around town to a basketball game at the high school, to watch Xave's hockey game, and to just generally settle in. On Sunday Xave had another hockey game out of town so we left him & George to their hockey & the rest of us went skiing--Anna & friend, Kirsten & friend & Manny & I. We had a blast showing Manny all the trails & runs & he amazed us with his skiing prowess. On Mon, quite soon after the kids went to school, we dropped him off at the hill & then Kirsten & I were to meet him there in the

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p.m. That is quite a story...I told Manny to be in the lodge at 1 p.m. & we would meet him for an afternoon of skiing. Well at 1 p.m. he wasn't there. I was concerned because at this point I didn't know Manny that well & was wondering if he was lost or hurt or something. So I sent Kirsten off skiing with a friend while I stayed near the bottom of the hill looking for Manny. Anyway, around 2 p.m. I spotted him & he was nonchalant & fine. When I asked him where he was at 1 p.m. he said "skiing." Well, I was kind of mad because I had been worried & I remembered your words that if he screwed up give him heck. So on the way up the chairlift I start this lecture about..."how do you expect me to let Xavier miss a half day of school to ski with you if you can't be in a certain place at a certain time etc. etc." As Manny's head is drooping lower & lower & I'm feeling like a real shit, I start to wonder whether he might have trouble telling time--so I ask him what time he has & he says 3:15. Guess what? It was actually 2:15! Because of the time change from East to West, Manny had reset his watch, but not by enough. Boy did I feel bad. Then when I questioned Manny some more he had actually been at the lodge at 1 p.m. his time & we weren't there. Can you believe it? Anyway, after that we never had any difficulty meeting up at a certain time & I never worried about him being on his own.

Mon night Manny went to the arena to watch Xave's hockey practice & ended up meeting 2 17 yr old boys from Saskatchewan who were here for a week of skiing. It turns out they ran into each other every morning at the hill so that when Kirsten & I would arrive at noon to ski with Manny he'd be chatting away with his new friends.

On Tues George took a few hours off work & he & I and Kirsten & girlfriends met Manny again at noon and we skied in a giant pack for the afternoon. It was such fun & the weather all week couldn't have been better. Every day Manny's skiing got stronger & he tackled new & more difficult runs. He's something else!

On Wed Xavier took the day off school & skied with Manny. There were also 22 kids from our school & 22 kids from Quebec at the hill because this was the week of our "French Exchange." That night Xave & Manny went out with some of the kids to the arcade & then to someone's house to watch a movie.

Thurs Manny was tired so we took a day off skiing & did some grocery shopping & puttering & housecleaning. Thurs night was the school dance & that's another one of Manny's surprises. Here I am worried that he might not have fun & I have Xavier assuring me that if Manny looks unhappy he will walk home with him, & what happens? Xave & Manny get invited to a party after the dance & don't get home til midnight at which time Xave bursts into our room to tell us that Manny was the best dancer in the place, never sat down for a minute, & was the total hit of the night! Manny's face was beaming as he says, "Yeah, I'm a good dancer." The only kids who came close to his dancing ability were the Quebec students which says something about Easterners. Oh, the other thing Xave said with a twinkle in his eye was that Manny dances so well because he's a "brother"--and Manny

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echoes--"Yeah, I'm a brother." I tell you...

Friday Manny slept late so I took him skiing for 1/2 day. That was the first day of fresh snow & Manny was skiing in powder up to his knees. When I picked him up he was soaking wet and exhausted from all the hard work of turning & he had lost a pole & cracked his goggles. Oh well--the dangers of downhill skiing...

Today Xavier slept late & when a friend came by to invite Xave to go watch some b-ball he saw Manny in the kitchen and invited him instead. So he's off again...

Some of the Manny surprises...his great voice and his knowledge of all the words to all the songs, his skill on skis, his incredible dancing, his independence, his ease with people, his appreciation of hockey and figure skating, his beautiful smile, & his quiet self-assurance. What more can I say.

As for homework. Well, whenever our kids did homework, Manny read, which I figured was good. He got into Charlotte's Web & he really enjoyed reading it. He did a math worksheet one night but I didn't push that. After all, it is his holiday.

This afternoon there's basketball & skating on the agenda so if Manny comes home exhausted don't be surprised.

Well now it's Sunday, our last day with Manny & Kirsten, & we'll certainly miss them both. One last day of skiing, one last dinner, and a nice drive to the airport. We hate to see the week come to an end.

Please think about the summer & convince Bill & gang & Bash that their coming too would make everything perfect. Have a great time in Puerto Rico

Love & xxxx

Annie, George & the gang

March date 3/6/89

Dear Annie, George, Xavier, Anna. I thank you for have me viseat you people. I well come and viseast in the sumertiem. and I like the skiing mountones it was fun to ski in CANADA (drawing of a maple leaf). The school was nice I like a lout. (drawing of school captioned: the school)

Thanks for the pisezes (presents) Anne and George. I well oppen theam when my brithday comes. I meies you people a lout. I well see you people in the summertime OK
See you Annie, George,
from Manny Weeks.

April 12, 1989

Dear Annie:

A belated Happy Birthday! Has my birthday postcard from Puerto Rico arrived yet? Also, the little package...did it make it

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through Customs unscathed (and duty free?). Customs...Immigration...there's finally an end to the saga. But first, let me tell you about Puerto Rico.

This second trip, just the two of us, was even more magical than the first. I can't believe that more tourists haven't discovered the non-San Juan, non-American-resort part of the island (in other words, most of it!). This time we proceeded immediately to Rincón and made it the center of the vacation. Our apartment was a pineapple's throw from the beach; it consisted of a bedroom and bath...the kitchen--stove, fridge, table and chairs--was arranged on the front porch! No bugs. No rain (the porch had a little roof). Charter has definitely discovered the joys of doing absolutely nothing and is becoming adept at it. We floated around in the sea by day, then brought our beer and wine to the edge of the ocean to watch the sunset (as did the other inhabitants of the Villa Antonio...many of them have been coming here for years...and they swear, with the authority of old sunset-watching hands, that it's possible to catch a glimpse of the elusive 'green flash' that the sun is said to produce just before it sizzles into the water).

...

Anyway, it was altogether wonderful and a needed break from all our deadlines. And it appears that Manny had a great time with Sharon. No crises. She celebrated his birthday (do we consciously plan to always be out of town for that event?). The notes in his assignment book look routine.

So what do you think about our exchanges with the government? Charter, of course, rose to the occasion with pages of indignation (which I dutifully typed, editing as I saw fit), and our intrepid gov't responded in predictably measured fashion (it was nice to know that our Senator actually took an interest and moved it all along...even though he is a Republican!). Meanwhile Manny, having gotten the experience off his chest, thought not another thing about it. It's always the way: something outrageous happens to him, we rise to his defense like mother and father wolves, and he walks away from the battle, suddenly bored. Well you know he had a perfect time with all of you, and that's what counts.

My neighbor Cathy, gave this quotation to me on an index card a while ago...it seems so perfectly descriptive of the kind of encounter Manny experienced in Toronto.

"One may easily imagine, without personal experience of it, the blight that sudden poverty can cast upon comfort, among other states of mind. But one is less likely to think of the agonies of discomfort which can be produced by a sudden lift into company and circumstances for which nothing in life has

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prepared one, where everything is a potential trap, a source of possible humiliation, an occasion for ignorance of the vital nuances of language, and willy-nilly, a constant proving ground."

Robert Nisbet, Prejudices, a Philosophical Dictionary

We've both raised our share of kids--biological, serendipitous and adopted--but to begin to catch up on one kid's 14 years of virtual non-existence sometimes defeats me. Charter used to say that we have two chances to really influence and change a child: once at the birth to six stage, and once more at the beginning of adolescence. Believing that, I can muster the strength to continue. But in Manny's case, R. Nisbet sure has it right!

Give me a call some morning when you're on your second cup of tea.

Love,

Maz

April 27, 1989

Dear Maz:

Just to put things into perspective, I thought I'd send you the letter Xavier got from Manny. And you thought he had Immigration on his mind when all along it was only 'grils.'

More soon.

Love,

Annie

March date 3/6/89

1 Dear Xavier: I had fun with you wheh I came to see you people. I had fun a the school daince on Thursday night.

2 Tell Tammy that I had fun daiening with her on Thursday night. I had fun thank you Xavier.

3 Tell Tammy I whount to go out with her OK. She is a nice gril Tell Tammy I well see her in the sumertime she is the best and the nice gril I have daiecn with in the school. Tell her I mies her so much.

4. and Xavier send me a litter soon Xavie. and Xavie give me Tammy'es addiers so I can right back to her.

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5 Thank you for the picher you gave me. I need a picher of Tammy.
and Xavie did you take to her about me did you tell her whunt I told you
have fun playing hocky OK Xavie
See you Xavier. right back soon OK I whunt to hear eveathing about it.

rejoiced, praised them unceasingly. When Manny Weeks arrived in Priscilla's ninth grade at the age of 18, he was drawn into a loving conspiracy that was to become his first real schooling.

Some years before, Priscilla had invited her to Resource Room as a visiting writer and she'd given an insight into how to teach children with disabilities. Her insight became, when her intelligence and skill were evident in the way she structured the academic program, Priscilla seemed to draw her teaching methods from a deep well of empathy. It was not enough that her children would simply survive the educational system; she expected them to succeed in it. She believed in them fiercely.

Priscilla Wilcox was a very large woman, whose the amplitude of her concern almost required that fulsome body, which was usually draped in flowing, flowered blouses that suggested fragrant kitchens and sunny summer porches. Her iron brown hair was styled to match, loosely coiled, held in color of barrettes. From behind a long wooden desk crowded with books, file folders and stacks of lined paper, vases of flowers and cans of pencils, she presided over her Resource Room with the commanding and unmistakable authority that some women seem to possess by nature.

Several days into the first semester, I received the first

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Like a guide in a huge museum, Priscilla Wilcox led her special needs kids in single file down emotional corridors that must have seemed to them overwhelmingly mysterious. She gave them her maps, revived their flagging spirits when they faltered, praised them unceasingly. When Manny Weeks arrived in Priscilla's ninth grade at the age of 16, he was drawn into a loving conspiracy that was to become his first real schooling.

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letter in what would become a two year correspondence. It arrived in Manny's backpack, a white envelope bearing my name in Priscilla's impeccable script and, in the lower left hand corner, "*Courtesy of Marie*." Thirty years dropped away with those words! I could see my mother's small, precise handwriting on all those notes that passed between her and the nuns of my childhood, dutifully delivered "*Courtesy of Marie*."

Priscilla's missives were somewhat different in tone than those of the Madames of the Sacred Heart.

9/9/85
Hi Marie

So, being a "new" Mom is a delightful challenge...I can relate to that! Manny speaks so warmly about Mom, Dad and Brother, it is clear that that part of the transition has been a total success. School is going to be another challenge but one for which we all have the highest of hopes.

The English class is setting up at a much lower level of literacy than I have previously experienced and this is a big plus for Manny's cuase. There are nine in total and reading levels are generally low, very low. Motivation is also very low but most voices are, too, so stimulation is going to be a possibility. Each year is different.

For a while, Manny will be able to finish the daily assignments in our 8th period Resource Room study. I shall appreciate home-time spent on review and oral reading. We are beginning with work-sheets in class, addressing vocabulary and our regular grammar text (too high for most but I believe in the kids' need to have a hard cover book for security). Most daily assignments will come from this book.

Manny will be encouraged to assume responsibility for getting homework papers home and back and for gathering assignments from mainstream teachers, then bringing same to us. Even as I write, the homeroom teacher just came by to see if I found Manny's math book. It was in one of my student desks, left here on Friday. "These little things" should be a major part of Manny's education.

Onward and upward! Hope to see you real soon.

Love ya,
Priscilla

From that day until the June afternoon five years later when Manny tossed his tassled mortarboard into the stuffy air of the high school gym, school would be as much a part of my life as it

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was of Manny's.

Right away Priscilla instituted an assignment book regime, mindful of Manny's tendency toward confusion. Between its tan covers went word of each day's tasks, teachers' comments, reminders about class pictures and soccer sign-up, a Civics quiz, math and English homework, an art or music project.

Every night after dinner and before his hour of TV, Manny and I would sit side by side at the diningroom table adding columns of numbers, squeezing vocabulary words into whole sentences, practicing spelling. Our little classroom included Charter at his drawing table, absorbing grammar lessons by default. He reminded me of those few bright students who, having completed their assignments ahead of the rest, got to work independently at the back of the room.

Not all the aptitude tests ^rnot the people who'd administered them had been able to explain to me the nature of Manny's learning deficit. I didn't have any idea whether his reading and math scores simply reflected his current skill levels, or if they represented a plateau beyond which he was incapable of climbing.

Like Priscilla, though, the only way I could approach the problem was to believe in Manny's potential; otherwise, the evenings that I used to spend reading and writing, and which had been transformed into free-form tutorials, would have been torture.

They probably were torture for Charter, but he rarely intervened except to make quiet suggestions when he sensed I was

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reaching my nightly patience limit.

"Manny, why don't you go on up to your room and try writing those words on your own."

"Maybe Manny should take a break, have a shower and we'll watch 'The A Team' together."

And I'd retire to the livingroom with my glass of wine and a cigarette.

Manny's worksheets began to demonstrate a grasp of the materials, but for a long time only Priscilla, Charter and I could decipher his careful cursive.

11/7/85

1. Milk come from a cow.
2. Ches come from
3. butter come from cow.
4. Souer cream is mad from cream.
5. Marderin is a come mad of oil.
6. Meet com from anounmoil.
10. jeille is mad of freote.
17. whoien is somd peopel drinck.

(Milk comes from a cow. Cheese comes from. Butter comes from a cow. Sour cream is made from cream. Margerine is made of oil. Meat comes from animals. Jelly is made of fruit. Hash browns are potatoes. Wine is what some people drink.)

Little by little I was discovering how Manny's thought processes worked. For instance, he could sound out many words, but that wasn't really how he mastered them. Only by use, by constant repetition did they become, one by one, part of his repertoire. So, while he could spell "Wilcox" or "school" or "Scruton Pond Road, Barrington, New Hampshire," he'd give the word "tomorrow" as many versions as there were vowels to arrange in endless combinations. Usually when he was in serious doubt, Manny used all of them. Likewise, his spoken vocabulary grew in

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response to his environment. He appeared to enjoy the new words he heard from us or our neighbors.

Sometimes this resulted in charming speech patterns. Because Charter said it, Manny began to announce that he'd be right back by saying, "See you shortly." Or he'd copy the way some people answered a question affirmatively. "Would you like a tuna sandwich?" "Please."

I began to enjoy the puzzle of this boy's brain. It was like happening on the hidden messages in the Sunday Times crossword. And, like that puzzle, the clues changed week to week.

In October, Maria called to say we had a court date to finalize Manny's adoption. I know I ought to have greeted the news with glee, but the fact was, Manny was already our son; we didn't need the State of Massachusetts to tell us that.

But perhaps Manny needed it, much the way Bill and Sebastian had needed Charter and me to be officially married--something that meant little to us. I have always had to remind myself that kids like things to be as they should. And kids know precisely how things should be.

So, on a bright October day we went to Boston: Charter and Manny and I, and Manny's very best friends, Wes and Josh.

Both boys were outsiders, even by Community standards. Wes, the older of Warren and Jennifer's two sons, was a solitary kid, given to making music. He had vast, if confused, sympathies for any underdog and had taken Manny under his wing from the start. Josh-- tall, skinny, blond Josh--found in Manny an undemanding

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companion, always ready to ice fish or skate or camp in a soggy tent on the banks of the Isinglass. Unlike the other neighborhood kids who quickly tired of Manny's repetitive conversation and often childish behavior, Wes and Josh seemed to have an endless store of sympathy for their friend.

We had a great time in Boston. The adoption proceedings, which took place in a wood-paneled courtroom presided in one of the State edifices, was presided over by a grandmotherly probate judge named, appropriately, Mary Muse. Maria arrived from Springfield, slightly flustered from her battles with Mass Pike traffic and Boston parking, looking predictably smart. She was more excited than we were, like the nurse at Bill's birth who exclaimed over my new baby as though it were hers.

The Wednesday's Child film crew filmed the ten-minute event and interviewed us afterwards. Manny rose to the occasion. That night, anchors Jack Williams and Liz Walker introduced their one-year-later success story.

"I like them a lot," Manny responded to the first question. "And I like New Hampshire. Very nice."

Shots of us saying happy things. Shots of Maria and Wes and Josh. Close-ups of Manny smiling shyly and looking great in his LL Bean gray hunting sweater with the shoulder patches.

We spent the rest of the day at the Aquarium and at Fanueil Hall gawking, eating, strolling away a school day. The boys bought souvenirs.

The adoption ceremony made me feel as though I was just a spectator, pushing over in the bleachers to make room for a late

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arrival. Not so difficult.

The snows came and with them a flurry of phone calls to the powers that were in order to get the school bus to pick Manny up at our mailboxes instead of waiting for him to walk, in the dawn dark, a mile to the crossroad.

I was back, as though I'd never left, into a mode of child-consciousness, child defense.

And my compatriot Priscilla continued her play-by-play.

11/6/85

Dear Marie-

I'm sharing this chuckle with you as it is so very typical of the unpredictability of students. On Tuesday, Manny's vocab test was interrupted by the photo-session. In Resource Room I told him that today's test would let me know if he could do these vocabs and I would try to take all his efforts (Tues Wed Thurs plus any make-up tests that we could fit in) and come up with an average. Today his test came in looking like this! I asked if he had studied with you and he said that there had been no time because "people?" had to go somewhere. I love the drawings but I also know he can do many of these words! I am going to cut him back to 10 words per session in hopes to get some higher quality definitions.

Priscilla

11/8/85 Progress Report

English: Today's quiz attached. Everything OK. You all have a nice weekend! No homework. We start a new unit on Wed PW

Thanksgiving happened at our house, a raucous gathering of siblings--Peg, Kate with her husband Jeff, Bob, and Basil with his wife Mary and their kids, Basil and Jesse. Charter's sister Charity arrived with Louise. When my brothers and sisters were around, dealing with Charter's mother became almost pleasant. Peg had a way of teasing her out of her self-absorption. Bob, always gentle, attended to her, bringing glasses of water,

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making her comfortable in her chair. Everyone took turns sitting with her and talking. But even at the end of a Thanksgiving celebration filled with laughter, Louise managed to give the day a melancholy edge.

"I'm sorry, dear," she said as she struggled into her black cloth coat, weeping softly. "It's just that these family gatherings make me heartsick for the way things used to be."

"God," Charity muttered to Charter, "did she come from the same family I remember?"

I made little sympathetic noises, but my heart was hardening with each passing holiday. Louise went on in this vein at every opportunity. She once said to me "You don't know what it's like to be alone on Labor Day."

(maybe here it's time to intriduce Charity more fully)

The weeks after Thanksgiving went by in a welter of client deadlines, shopping and preparations for Christmas.

Manny's behavior in school was so exemplary that a rare outburst occasioned more elaborate note writing.

12/11/85

Manny went to the chalk board to do his share of the homework. He mis-read one sentence and did #3 instead of #4. When it came time to correct, he was asked to just leave his work but to do the missed sentence in the space above. He growled, "It's all wrong anyway. I'll erase it all." I told him it was not necessary. Just put the other sentence on. He slashed away with the eraser and destroyed not only most of his won work but some of another student. I raised my voice and tried to stop him from erasing but was not in time. He turned and yelled back at me that it was already erased and all wrong anyway. He was sent to his seat and ignored for the rest of the period. He

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watched and appeared to listen, would not pass in his paper when called for but later, slipped it on my desk). He was quiet for the remainder of the period. This was the first show of temper that I have seen in English class.

Manny always met adversity with his head down. When I needed to confront him with evidence of bad behavior, I became used to talking, at least at the beginning of our conversation before I insisted that he look at me, to a dark and curly head of hair.

"Manny, Mrs. Wilcox tells us that you were very rude to her."

Silence.

"Manny, were you rude to Mrs. Wilcox?"

Silence and a murmur. "She was..." something something something.

"Manny, no matter what you thought was the problem, it's not OK to be rude to your teacher. She's working very hard to help you do well in school."

Silence. Manny gives up. Manny waits, picking at his cuticles.

"I think it would be nice if you'd write Mrs. Wilcox a note. Why don't you go up to your room and think about how to write an apology to her."

Dear Mrs. Wilcox

I am soower i yeilled at you.
I wonot tyeill at you back.
I weille not mak a moustack.
I love you soois mouche.
I well feiec the moustacke if there is a moustacke on it.
I love you soois mouche.
I kare aboieout you.
I well behaieve in class soois I kien get good graieass.
Love, Manny Weeks.

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(I am sorry I yelled at you. I won't talk back to you. I will not make a mistake. I love you so much. I will fix the mistake if there is a mistake on it. I love you so much. I care about you. I will behave in class so I can get good grades.)

12/12

Period 8 was a pure delight! He got busy, said he knew how to do the grammar and proceeded to prove it! Loved the note...will treasure it. He is usually such a joy, it is easy to work these "bumps" out. PW

We took Manny to my parents' house--a generous and drafty remodeled barn in Vermont--for Christmas. In a family so large that my youngest sister only outranks my oldest son by two years, there has always been room for more: adolescent friends at odds with their own families, visiting cousins, new children. I remember dinners at the long table in our old house when Dad would suddenly point at me or Peg or Tom and demand--for the benefit of one of our startled schoolmates--"Do I know you?" As he got older and we all continued to use his home as a halfway house, Dad grew weary of the parade. Not surprisingly, he began to resent anyone who intruded on his time with Mom. Nonetheless, he continued to attend to the ones whom he sensed were special.

Much as I detested the season's shopping frenzy, I loved the family chaos of Christmas in Vermont, especially that December when fifteen-year-old Manny was welcomed without question, without hesitation. He and Dad connected over the complications of working the black box that controlled the satellite dish. And Mom added his birthday, favorite foods, taste in clothes to the domestic master list as he became the newest member of the clan.

The morning after Christmas the place was littered with gift detritus and grandchildren's outerwear. Sisters and brothers

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crowded the kitchen table eating breakfast and making pots of tea while Mom tidied and jotted shopping lists for the next meal. Dad had taken to his room with his pipe and a paperback. Outside the living room window, Mt. Equinox was a purple-black shrug against a cold blue winter sky.

Manny was sitting quietly by the fireplace, thumbing a National Geographic, his presents in a neat pile beside him. "Want to learn how to ski?" Charter suddenly asked him, folding a section of the Sunday Times. "Marie, how about it? Want to come?" Neither Charter nor I skied very well or very often, but the prospect of spending a beautiful winter day on Bromley Mountain appealed to me. And it clearly interested Manny who located his new down jacket and wool cap, borrowed a pair of ski gloves from his uncle David and, with uncharacteristic alacrity, presented himself at the door.

While Charter dealt with the ski school, I took Manny to rent skis. Even at that early hour the room was crowded. Women in sleek outfits towed pink and purple pre-schoolers, fat as outlet shopping bags, to the first area where business-like teens barked, "Shoe size? Take this form. Next!" as they pulled boots from numbered slots and banged them on the wood counter. Benches were filling with people. The snap of buckles alternated with the distinctive two-step clunk of shod parents as they negotiated the lines with their children. A swinging door brought gusts of snowy air into the damp wool atmosphere of the rental room.

Manny sat hunched over, staring at the black and green

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plastic boots on his feet. I bent and fastened the clasps, thinking about the old days of laces and icy fingers.

"Stand up, hon. How do they feel?"

Manny stood, still looking at his feet as if waiting for new information.

"Are they comfortable?"

He took two steps forward, heel and toe, heel and toe. "I don't know."

Like a shoe clerk, I reached down to press the place where his big toe should have been, but the shiny boot that held his foot was as hard as a typewriter case. "Manny, does your foot feel OK? Is it cramped or anything?"

"I guess not."

"Manny, please." I tried to keep the irritation out of my voice. "You're the only one who can tell if these boots fit. You can get a bigger size if you need to."

He walked a few steps further. His forehead was furrowed in concentration. "Manny!" Patience, I said to myself as he looked back at me, his brown eyes wide with confusion.

"How do you tell?" I asked the man beside us, but he was struggling with his squirming, red-faced son and didn't hear. If this were a little kid, I fumed inwardly, I'd understand.

"It's OK, Mom." Manny patted my head the way he always did when he sensed I was upset.

I gave up. 12 was Manny's shoe size; 12 would be his ski boot. We moved on to the ski-fitting area where another bright-eyed ski bum quizzed Manny on his weight and level of

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proficiency. "140. Beginner," I answered for him. She handed him a pair of scuffed skis, shoved a pole into his armpit and measured to his wrist. "Have a great day!" she chirped and dismissed us. We threaded our way into the bright outdoors where Charter was standing next to a blue pennant marked 'B'. A young woman in a one-piece blue jumpsuit was gathering her morning's brood of stumbling students, directing them to the lift.

"This is your group, Manny. We'll meet you here at noon. Do you have your watch? Both hands on the twelve."

"I know that, Mom," Manny answered quietly, and I was immediately sorry I'd said it. Sometimes it was hard for me to switch gears between Manny the child and Manny the young man.

We watched them go: the lithe instructor; the small man all in black, struggling to stay upright; three children crossing and uncrossing their short skis, starting forward; the woman with a huge white fur hat and a day glo parka who laughed and waved her pole at some people taking her picture; and Manny, testing his legs like a skater on fresh ice, moving on the snow, awkward, tentative. We followed their progress across the icy spots near the lodge to the chair lift. The last we saw of Manny, he was standing alongside the man in black, in the way of a swinging chair that careened like a ferris wheel ride, then, caught at the knees, he was seated and lofted, poles and skis at all angles, off the ground and up into the clean air, above the slope, above zig zagging forms racing toward the bottom.

By the time Charter and I got back to the ski rental room, we had the place to ourselves. Outfitted, we went to the ticket

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window, bought an afternoon pass, then retired to the deck of the lodge with our coffee and tea and the rest of the Times. Occasionally I'd glance up at the hill. The beginner slope was wide and gentle. A morning of sun had softened the surface and the V's of snowplow turns made elegant patterns between the stands of pine. It was easy to spot the ski classes descending in looping lines behind the instructors. I didn't catch sight of Manny's group.

"Marie, look!" Charter was standing at the railing, holding his hand to his eyes. "Is that Manny?"

Weaving among the multicolored heaps of the fallen, skis in parallel, body bent into the fall line, a slim shape was nearing the bottom. He ended his run at the blue pennant, in a spray of snow, stopping like a skater.

"Could that possibly be Manny?"

The instructor was beaming when we arrived. She draped an arm over Manny's shoulder. "I took his poles away. They're lethal weapons in his hands," she laughed. "Otherwise, he's doing great. I don't think he needs an afternoon lesson. Just let him practice. This boy's a natural!"

"I can ski," Manny announced in a voice that said he wasn't surprised.

I turned to the instructor. "He's trying out for the Puerto Rican ski team, right Manny?"

Manny smiled and looked down. "Right, Mom." And then, "I think I'll be needing a pair of goggles."

When we got back home, Manny wrote his Christmas thank you

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notes, including one to my folks.

Dear Garnmom and Garnpol:

*Thant for the coious and shous: and have me come to your house.
Thans for breing me to the moeves and thans for shoes me ho to
teren the T.V. on to a cheanow. I hop you will have a neivs
teripe on the planey.*

Love your Gran Sun

Manny C. Weeks

(Thanks for the clothes and the shoes and for having me come to your house. And thanks for bringing me to the movies and for showing me how to turn the TV on to a channel. I hope you will have a nice trip on the plane...)

Manny finished ninth grade and graduated back into ninth grade, the deal we made when Paul Asbell welcomed him into Spaulding Junior High.

Already he was on the SJHS soccer team. He'd exhibited in the annual art show. He'd crafted a musical instrument. He'd fallen in love with a girl who was going with someone else.

But he needed another year of Priscilla's guidance, another year of a school environment that catered to his problems and asked him to grow up.

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(The High School years: girls, male friends, sports, special teachers, learning to drive, growing into independence)

(There follow some of the pieces--in no particular order--needing transitions and more about other aspects of Charter and my other concerns: family illnesses and deaths, our careers, our relationship)

...
*Forget the coaches shouting back
about the way the game is played
and consider the game
they're already playing, or playing
perhaps elsewhere on some other field,*

Wesley McNair

From his first days on the Barrington Middle School's basketball squad, through ten days of summer soccer camp on the grounds of an exclusive private school, to stints in the local Little League and his years playing wing for Spaulding Junior High and High School, Manny never got the hang of team sports. Like his Canadian cousin Julian who had been known to stop in the middle of a hockey match to retrieve a referee's dropped pen, Manny was not fired with the spirit of competition.

But Manny could run. As a basketball player, he dashed back and forth at the edges of the court, cheering enthusiastically whenever anyone, on either side, made two points. At soccer practice, we'd spot him immediately, the left wing loping gracefully just inside the sideline, shouting encouragement to his teammates as they passed the ball everywhere but in his

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direction. His grasp of baseball was keenest when he was at bat; but though he had a fine throwing arm, I never saw him field a ball in a game.

Manny looked terrific in uniform. Spaulding's red shorts and red and white shirt suited his lean body and long legs. One of my favorite photos shows him posed kneeling on a green field against a backdrop of flaming maples, a black and white soccer ball balanced on one bent leg. His curly hair is cropped close to his head and he is smiling like a winner.

Except when the coach exploded in the locker room after a particularly humiliating defeat, It didn't seem to matter to Manny if his team won or lost. He just liked to play, and he loved the cleats and shin pads, the numbered jerseys, the purple mimeographed sheets of instructions and diagrams.

Manny began his career in team sports when he came to New Hampshire. He brought to each endeavor his innate skills and he never improved beyond them. I sometimes think of those long-suffering math and science teachers who doubled as coaches on fall afternoons. They were given a lanky boy with tireless legs and a sweet disposition. But despite their time-proven training methods and heroic efforts, Manny Weeks would remain simply a handsome presence at the bottom left of the annual team photograph.

It's mid-June and Charter and I have come to the ballfield to watch Manny play. The parking lot is dotted with station wagons and pickup trucks. Parents sell cold drinks and steamed hot dogs from a handmade concession stand. Umpires and coaches arrive from their day jobs while Little Leaguers of all ages

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warm up on dusty diamonds surrounded by sagging snow fence.

The kids are wearing the logos of their local sponsors. George Calef's Fine Foods. Lenzi Construction. The Christmas Dove. Landry's Auto Salvage. Knight's Garage. Southeast Bank for Savings. Davis Concrete. Farina's Family Dental Care.

Our Babe Ruth team takes the field with much ball tossing and ass slapping. Manny jogs into deep left, turn and crouches, punches his fist rhythmically into his glove. He has it down: the stance, the determined squint, the flex of throwing arm, the pawing of one foot in the dirt.

Innings pass. Manny strikes out. Manny tosses his bat with the disgust of a seasoned player in a slump. Manny lets a pop fly drop. Manny watches a base hit become a homerun. Manny runs to the dugout. Manny returns to the outfield.

Bottom of the ninth. Manny turns and crouches, punches his glove. He looks exactly like a baseball card rookie from a village in Central America.

As the shortstop catches an infield fly, ending the losing game and releasing his teammates into a rush for bicycles, Manny remains, frozen in his practiced posture.

Our neighbor in the bleachers crumples his soda can and turns to Charter. "What do you suppose he's thinking?"

It was a gray, drizzly afternoon and at first I put Manny's low mood down to that, which, in retrospect was stupid. Though he commented on the weather as sagely as any breakfast regular at Phil's Diner, Manny's take on the world had nothing to do with climate. I asked him about his day and he responded with a quiet, "Fine," instead of his usual "Great."

Rather than retreating to his room as was his habit, he stayed at the table, flipping the pages of The New Yorker.

"So Manny, tell me about your day." I was still only half attending to him.

"That's OK," he replied, in a teenager's version of 'no thanks.'

I pushed my notepad aside and looked at him. His shoulders were rounded. He was picking absently at his cuticles with one

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thumb.

I made a pot of tea and brought him a cup.

"Something bad happened."

"I didn't get in trouble."

"But something happened."

"No. Well, sort of."

"Want to tell me about it?"

"Not really." But he didn't leave. I sensed he might be waiting for me to push him further. Had this been Bill or Sebastian, I'd probably have let it alone, confident that they'd talk it over eventually if they needed to. But with Manny, who found it difficult enough to volunteer even the most innocuous information, I often pressed.

The radio was tuned to WGBH, my afternoon jazz program. I rose and switched the station to WERZ. The music that made me feel as though I were an unwilling passenger in the backseat of an electric blue Camero did seem to relax Manny's bunched muscles. His fingers stopped picking and began a soft drumming.

"Was it something to do with the kids in school?" I prompted.

"Yeah."

"Your friends?"

"No!"

"Other kids, huh?"

"Yeah. Other kids." His voice sounded hard. "Those other kids."

"Other kids can be mean sometimes."

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"I hate mean." He still wasn't looking at me, but I only insisted that he look at me when the two of us were confronting some issue that involved lying or stealing or mouthing off at the soccer coach. I knew somehow that this was a different situation.

What went on in Manny's life when I wasn't there? What lay in between the cheery missives from his teachers, the bulletins Manny constructed in his morning notes and dinner conversations? Which girl did he pine for? What kids in his upstairs classes, beyond the Resource Room, really liked him? Who did he have lunch with?

There was so much I'd never learn from our third son. But I knew him in a strange, visceral way. And I took on his crises as though they were my own, the way I'd always done with Bill, Sebastian and Lenya.

My adult self could never quite shake younger memories of rejection and lost loves, household upheavels, parental storms, abortion, friendships gone mysteriously awry. Empathy brought me close to my children's lives, useless as that may have been in giving them direction.

Yet the one experience I could not share with my Puerto Rican son was the very matter that concerned him as he lingered over his mug of milky tea, allowing me to quiz him.

"They called me a nigger." Manny spat the sentence into a silence.

It was bound to happen. Rochester was not the most enlightened spot on the globe. On the other hand, there were not

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the simmering hatreds of a bigger city. Manny had been welcomed into the homes of his white friends, roller skated with an ever-changing roster of white girls, gotten perfectly acceptable haircuts from white barbers, walked freely in any part of town.

But it was bound to happen. His skin color would be turned into an insult just as surely as if he had been fat, or spoke with a lisp, or walked with a limp.

All this I recollected in tranquility. At that moment, though, when Manny said "nigger," I lashed out at those nameless mean kids.

"You're not a nigger, you're a spic!" Manny's expression was so startled that I began to laugh. "They're so ignorant they don't even know the difference between an African American and a Puerto Rican!"

Manny managed a weak smile.

"And what do they call Danny when they're being mean?" I asked, referring to his Korean classmate. Manny didn't know, so I tore a clean sheet from my pad and together we made a list of every racial slur we could think of and the kids we knew who might have heard those words flung at them. The list wasn't long, after all this was New Hampshire, but it served the purpose.

I asked Manny to rip up the paper. He patted me on the shoulder and took his backpack up to his room. Before long I heard him singing to his music.

"You said *what*?" Charter had laid his briefcase on the table

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and was putting the beer and milk in the fridge.

"It just came out. I was so pissed."

"Well, that's one way to approach it," he laughed.

"But seriously, I've been trying to figure out how Manny really views himself. Do you think he's unhappy about his color?"

Charter took off his jacket and lit a cigarette. "Hard to say. In a way, he tends to speak of himself in terms of what he can do."

"Yeah, you're right. 'I'm a great skier.' 'I'm a very good painter.'"

"Frankly, considering what he has to overcome, color is the least of his problems. He'll handle it. You know Manny...he doesn't stay upset long. Let's see how things go. He may need a hit of Bill's black-is-beautiful routine."

"Excellent idea. Well, enough." I went into the other room and called up the stairs, "Manny, when you get organized, would you bring down your homework assignments?"

"I will do that, Mom."

At the last minute, two teachers conspired to make sure that Manny and Flo went to the Junior Prom. I first heard about it when Gail called on the Tuesday before.

"We don't know what happened, but Florence has a dress and

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no date. And Manny's been dropping hints all month that he'd love to go, but he hasn't asked anybody. You know how shy he is. Well, the school nurse--do you know Ann?--told me about Flo and we just kind of put the two of them together. I hope you don't mind!"

"Incredibly creative, Gail. Now what?"

"Well Florence has already told Manny what color her gown is and Manny has to get a tux with a tie and cummerbund to match it. Also a corsage. I know it's short notice..."

"No, this'll be fun. What else?"

I was abysmally ignorant of prom protocol. My Convent of the Sacred Heart certainly didn't countenance such things. And no boy from the local high school had ever invited me to one. The closest I'd come was the Gotham Ball, an event designed to introduce young ladies to Catholic society and, more importantly, to Catholic boys. My mother insisted I attend. My boyfriend was Protestant so I had been compelled to spend that gala evening with two unenthusiastic escorts whose best feature was their height. Not so different from the Manny-Flo arrangement after all.

Charter wasn't much help either. He had gone to his junior prom with Marilyn Richards, a bona fide girlfriend. But that was in the Fifties and things were simpler then. In any case, he remembered nothing of the details.

Luckily, Gail was right up to the minute with prom information.

"Here's the schedule. You bring Manny to Florence's house

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for pictures around 3:00 on Saturday. Then Florence has invited Manny to join her and another couple for dinner. She insists that she pay for herself, and she's driving. At 7:00, parents and friends come to the gym for the opening ceremony. And that's it. Your only problem will be finding a tux at this late date."

When Manny came home from school he followed his usual routine, made a sandwich, poured a glass of milk, sat down at the table.

"How was your day?"

"Great." Manny's day was always great.

"Anything interesting happen?"

"I finished sanding my wood project."

"Anything else?" Manny paused and looked up at the ceiling as if searching his memory for something. He reached into his back pocket and pulled out a wad of folded papers. One by one he smoothed them out.

"Oh yeah. I'm going to the prom."

"That's terrific, Manny. With whom?"

He ran his finger along the words on the top sheet. "Flo. Her dress is blue. Not light blue. More a darker blue. Darker than light. I have to buy a corsage." He said the last word carefully, testing the sound of it. "The kind that goes on your hand." Flo had written it all down, including directions to her house.

"You must be excited."

"Not really." But Manny looked pleased.

Charter called four rental places before he found one in

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Portsmouth that still had a tux and darker than light blue accessories. Manny and I drove back to Rochester where he spent half an hour at Studley's Florist choosing a wrist corsage that satisfied his aesthetic demands, finally settling on an arrangement of small dyed carnations in a nest of shiny leaves and baby's breath.

He stayed late at school for the rest of the week, rehearsing the grand processional march. By Saturday he was ready.

Word had spread through the community. Joyce and Nick came over for a viewing. We took pictures of him on the porch against pine clapboards. Wim and Jonell needed to fuss over him, so he posed between them in their garden beside the little fountain where 'Manneke Pis' arched his little stream into a pool and we took more pictures. Then on to Flo's house for yet another round of photos.

The May afternoon was heavy with late spring heat. As we pulled into the yard, Flo came out to meet us, scattering siblings who were building a frog house near a shallow puddle.

"Please come in." The shades were pulled in the small livingroom. Parents and relatives filled every couch and easy chair, smoking and drinking beer. Somewhere a television mumbled. Charter and I shook everyone's hand. Manny shook everyone's hand. Flo let us talk for a few minutes about the weather and the origin of the stuffed bass that hung on a plaque on the wall. Then, as though this was one of the scenes she'd rehearsed, she disappeared into the kitchen and returned with a

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white box.

The boutonniere she had chosen for Manny was a carnation of the precise shade of the ones he now affixed to her wrist as we took more pictures.

Finally we repaired to the front lawn for more pictures.

In one snapshot, an elegant young man in a tuxedo, wearing my father's pleated shirt with the onyx buttons and matching cufflinks, crooks his right arm for a young woman in a gentian blue gown with sleeves of blue lace and a bow at the hip. Her curly red hair is pulled back on one side in a jeweled comb.

In another, the couple stands behind a row of grinning children, one of whom is suffocating a frog in her cupped hands.

Later they appeared briefly, moving in sedate procession in a sea of frothy gowns and polished shoes under a canopy of tinsel streamers. In the stands, bulbs flashed. Red lights winked on video cameras. Then the grownups filed out to the recorded strains of the first dance. Manny waved to the crowd as he crossed the foul line.

To the best of my knowledge, he and Flo never saw each other outside of school again.

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durable vehicle the engine of which he'd rebuilt twice and under which he spent a portion of every month. I liked driving it despite having to double clutch on the downshift and haul on the steering wheel for all but the gentlest turns.

It became my habit on Saturdays to deliver our trash to the dump on the way to pick up the mail. Before our dump became first a landfill and then a waste transfer station, the routine was to back up to the edge of a smoldering mountain of garbage, let down the tailgate, climb into the bed and fling trash bags, sheetrock scraps, dead toasters, broken rakes, used tarpaper, tangled chicken wire and anything else left over from the week's labors onto the pile.

Smoke of a particular, unmistakable scent drifted in the air and bottles exploded with the sound of muffled firecrackers.

Neighbors regularly lingered at the dump, exchanging pleasantries and gossip, keeping an eye out for anything that, in their opinion, had no business being thrown away. Not infrequently, items brought to be discarded never hit the ground. And though I wasn't nearly as determined as some when it came to dump picking, I did acquire a pink bathroom scale this way, along with a boy's bike lacking only a pedal and a pair of waders that could be made serviceable again with duct tape.

The dump keeper, Ray Berube, knew just about everyone in town. Once I'd been there enough Saturdays, he recognized me, too. But he never knew my real name because he christened me himself.

"Good morning, Mrs. Rockefeller!" he would shout as I ground

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the truck into reverse and eased it to a stop. "Beautiful morning we're having."

It was that old International, I'm sure, with its mismatched fenders and wired up tailgate that prompted his little joke. And when Charter had the truck repainted a deep shade of red, Ray took immediate note.

"New truck, eh Mrs. Rockefeller?"

"Certainly not, Doctor," I replied, for he deserved a title as much as I did. "Just a coat of paint. How do you think I stay so rich?"

When I bought a little used car and carried our garbage in its trunk, Ray remained cheerful, but he stopped calling me Mrs. Rockefeller.

Charter loved that truck. He kept its oil changed and its innards lubed. He washed it regularly and in winter took care to spray up under the wheel wells to remove the road salt. One Christmas I had the bench seat reupholstered as his present.

When it came time, in the summer of Bill's 15th year, to teach him to drive, Charter sat on the passenger side of the floor-mounted gearshift and they set off down the driveway. They weren't gone long. Within minutes the truck reappeared with Charter at the wheel. It had a fresh dent in the left fender. Amazingly, Charter was laughing.

"Bill took a slow turn at the mailboxes and kept on turning. Right into a telephone pole!"

"Anybody hurt?" I echoed what my Dad would invariably say

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as, one by one, most of his children sent moving vehicles off embankments, into snowdrifts, caroming into other cars and skidding into ditches. No amount of manual-studying or shift-practicing in empty parking lots seemed adequate to prepare any of us for life on the road. Time alone had taught us, and I was resigned to watching my own children destroy clutches and crumple the bumpers of other people's cars on the journey toward driving competence.

Like my father, Charter was patient and generous with kids. But the day Bill came home from visiting his friends in Barnstead with several broken leaf springs and the hood of the truck in the bed, he and Charter had words. Money aside, sentiment aside, it was almost impossible to find replacement parts for the International. We never did discover how Bill managed to dislodge the hood from its hinges. And it was blind luck that led Charter to the only matching springs in the corner of the last junk yard he searched.

When Sebastian got his driver's license a couple of years later, he passed the test in my Pinto. It, too, took its share of beatings as Sebastian mastered the finer points of driving, but the emotional aspects weren't quite as fraught, despite incidents that included a licenseless, uninsured young woman running into his rear end at a red light at a Concord intersection.

Yet, more than transportation, trucks seem to me to serve the same function in the lives of grown men as Tonka toys did when they played with them as boys. Like their tiny

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counterparts, real trucks--sturdy to the point of invincibility, straightforwardly masculine in design and purpose, rude of noise and idiosyncratic of behavior--needed a firm hand and a kind of rough attention to detail. All trucks, evidently, required special sneakers, heavy duty shocks, esoteric electrical equipment, and particular tending in the areas of starter motors and generators.

Charter was versed in all of these matters and willing to share his knowledge. In fact, I think he felt it his obligation to pass along his understanding of the intricacies of a truck exhaust system or radiator to the next generation of truck drivers. He'd taught himself--lying, for instance, on a cardboard sheet under the front end on a brutally cold Christmas day--and he would teach Bill, Sebastian and Manny.

I like to think that the three of them can now find a truck's dipstick, struggle successfully with a frozen lugnut, examine the shade of their transmission fluid or patch a rust hole in a rocker panel. I really want to see each of my boys dealing with the proletarian problem of making some superannuated, obsolete vehicle deliver one more week, one more month of usefulness.

There's no better teacher than this truck. And no better teacher than the man who taught himself--out of necessity and stubbornness and the realization that his father taught him none of this--to cope.

In the end, unwilling to put Fred of Knight's Garage in the

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So we turned him over to Mr. Towle of Towle's Driving School in Rochester. Three afternoons a week, Mr. Towle, wearing a dark suit and a red tie, picked Manny up at the high school for an hour of driving in his spiffy black Pontiac with automatic transmission. According to Mr. Towle's reports, they confronted the STOP sign and the YIELD, the traffic light, the pedestrian crosswalk. They negotiated the streets of Rochester, Route 16 to Dover, back roads, and even the Spaulding Turnpike. For six weeks, the soft-spoken Mr. Towle persisted. At the end of the course, he asked to meet with us.

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The day was sunny and the wet snow that had fallen the night before was melting quickly. Manny put the car in gear and eased out the driveway. He drove slowly down the dirt road, commenting on every bump and pothole. When he hit the paved part, he accelerated a little.

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Charter's father usually only invited people to lunch when he had something serious to discuss. His will. His ex-wife. His only daughter who always disappointed him. I had been his guest at such a meal soon after Charter and I married. After the salad but before dessert, Silas had made it clear that I was expected to produce a son. As he lectured me on my familial obligation, I stared at my half-eaten sandwich. I was uncharacteristically silent. He kept talking about the Weeks family name and the Weeks family heirlooms and the Weeks family expectations until finally, at a complete loss as to how to respond to this outrage, I pushed my chair back and left the restaurant. All the way home I rehearsed the words I should have said, the things I'd say when I saw him again, the angry letter I'd write.

1983. My fortieth year. Charter Weeks and I had been together, for six years. My two sons were in college and I was blissfully happy in my new life as childless writer. Not that the poems came any easier without the interruptions of pediatric appointments and soccer tournaments, and certainly the necessities of making a living and growing our food filled any gaps in a day... it was just that I was confronting sensations I hadn't experienced since I was eighteen. I was in love. I was free.

I'd long since come to terms with the fact that my reproductive choices weren't always comfortable for my parents to accept; and my new in-laws' agenda concerned me not at all. Charter's mother bemoaned her lack of grandchildren, but that was only a single item on her long list of complaints. His father, not to be deterred, had

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broached the subject to Charter on several more occasions after that first lunch, to no avail. I wasn't the least interested in serving as brood mare for his patriarchal line and Charter refused to discuss the matter with Silas.

Though he'd fantasized about having a child to accompany him into old age, Charter treated me gently. He'd married, after all, a woman who had said from the outset that she had no intention of untying her tubes or searching for yet another creature to raise up.

Carol called us one fall evening in obvious distress. Could she come over and talk to us?

Carol was Charter's first wife and a neighbor. Though we had friends and family in common, we saw her infrequently--at Community gatherings, the grocery store--so this urgency surprised me.

"I don't know how to tell you. I don't know where to begin." She pulled her baggy sweater tightly around her long cotton dress. Charter poured her a glass of red wine. "I had lunch with Silas today."

"Oh God, now what?" Even I didn't anticipate what came next.

"He wants me to have a baby!" Carol blurted. "He told me how you wouldn't and how he needs a grandson and..."

"Whose baby?" Charter interrupted.

"I don't know." Now Carol was crying. I reached for her hand over the table, concern for her immediate pain and confusion outweighing my own shock. "At first he seemed to be suggesting that I get pregnant by Charter. Then I got the feeling that he'd do it himself."

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"That son of a bitch!" Charter banged his hand on the table, spilling beer on the rug.

"And then he said I could always go to a sperm bank--Harvard or somewhere--and he'd give me money to raise it. Supposing," she giggled through a sob, "supposing I had a girl!"

Charter called his father and said the next time he'd talk to him would be through a psychiatrist. Carol calmed down and walked home through the woods. Shaken, badly in need of a dose of humor, we drove up Oak Hill to Guy's house.