

Marie Harris

YOUR SUN, MANNY

Sebastian's edits.

thanks!

For Bill and Sebastian

For Anne and George

And for Charter, always

a call on the Internet
for personal
essays about
living (parenting
on) a commune.



teecia Manning ~~gtr (mother)~~
"Recollection project"
PO Box 3729
Grand Central Station
NY
10163
mother
child in commune/P.E.

PROLOGUE

~~✗~~
Two little boys in superhero pajamas huddle at the bottom of the stairs. They have been awakened in the night by their mother who is shouting, shouting. Wakened in their silent night by the sound of her fists punching holes in sheetrock. They are unable, of course, to make sense of this nightmare. All they can do is wait for her to come and coax them back into the safe dark. In time she comes.

*

She flees with them to her sister's house by train across Canada and they are happy.

Oh Annie, what is happening to me?

She brings them back home to the ~~white house~~ ^{*their grandparents' big*} in upstate New York and they are happy. ¹

Who's been sleeping in my bed?

She leaves for seacoast New Hampshire in a station wagon with failing brakes. And they are happy there, too.

Will anyone ever love ~~this~~ me? ^{awk sounding}

Because of a man who painted a portrait of her in a black velvet dress, she moves them to a farm in the country. He has dogs. They add ducks and goats and geese. And they are happy there.

How many mistakes do I get?

She sends them away because, finally, she is weary of him and weary herself. She hopes they will be happy there. With Daddy.

When she finds her true love one midnight and goes with him to his house in the woods, she is happy.

*

But now she has lost them.

Have I given you enough bread, enough pebbles to drop? Will you find your way back to me, or will crows eat the crumbs, rains wash the stones into anonymous rivers? */m.u.!*

*

Women towing small children walk in the woods past my house to the houses of women with small children. I wave to them but they don't see me. I am invisible behind glass.

I walk out alone, notice a bright thing among wintergreen: blue teething ring worn smooth as river rock. Plastic clue that will never decompose.

*

The dreams recur. Animals tethered, then abandoned. Infants in the attic...somehow, oddly...forgotten, like dusty dolls with yellowed satin gowns and painted ceramic heads. Or torn teddy bears. A friend says it's me, those goats and babies. She says they're the me I have neglected to nurture. But I think it's my first sons. I am drawn to the barn's sliding doors at night; and I do mount the stairs that lead to the box-crammed top floor, shoulder up the trap door. I want to make good on the promises I made. What were the promises? Who have I failed? What's to be done now?

→ this whole prologue is sat + beautiful.

it's also a nice intro into the bigger book.

important for us to know something
about you, to get ~~some~~ some
context

could even hear/read some MORE
in this vein

you move along rather quick. Are there other
fragments already written that ~~you~~ you could add back in?
some (one or 2) on Churter, on Skimmille life...

as is, this prologue leaves you sounding unfulfilled, scattered,
needing.

I think when Manny came to you
that you were full, happy — That's the great irony
of this story —
or its beauty:

there wasn't really any room at the Inn —
but you made it any-
way.

Marie Harris

WEDNESDAY'S CHILD

*

great beginning to this story

My older son is visiting on spring break. As we talk on the drive home from the airport, I find myself telling him about the one small shadow on my happiness with Charter...he still speaks about adopting a child, being someone's father.

Nothing more is said until the eve of Bill's departure.

Go to bed, Mom. I have to talk to Charter ... I overhear the start of their conversation. Eventually I fall asleep under a silver-green moon shining through the skylight. I slept like a baby, lightly, turning and twisting until the blankets wound into swaddling cloth.

And besides, ^{na!} [the son had said, when he'd finished talking to the man who had taught him wood and water,] you already have two sons...Sebastian and me. We will never leave you. ^{present tense?} ^{this part - your voice - not in italics}

So the husband who was not the father became a father that night. We both cried.

*

Afternoons are still warm enough for our walk through the woods to the pebbled patch by the Isinglass River where we shed our clothes and waded out to the flat rocks. Half floating in lazy late summer currents, we sip gin and tonic from a mayonnaise jar.

Once home, Charter oils a cast iron frying pan while I set the table. A man. A woman. Watching the last of the Boston news, waiting for the weather. As usual. Blessedly usual. Half floating in the olio of stabbings and weather, consumer updates and sports. Then this feature we have never seen. Wednesday's Child. And now a solemn boy who's looking right at us. I turn up the volume.

"My name is Manny. I have never had a family and I would like one... you know, a man and a woman."

(Why do I turn up the volume? Why do I write down the number on the screen?)

yes!

*

"I'm Maria, Manny's social worker."

The edges of her perfect English are softened with Spanish cadences. We are sitting at a table in a darkened restaurant off

(I really like the different voices to this book.)

a highway in Massachusetts. Charter and Maria order coffee. My tea arrives as three separate entities: empty cup, tea bag, carafe of tepid, coffee-flavored water. She spreads sheaves of paper on the thick cloth but does not touch them.

good
detail

Let me tell you what I know.

The story of any boy's fourteen years should tumble and trip over dogs and cousins and best friends, baseball gloves and birthday parties, hand-me-down bicycles, stuffed animals, crayoned drawings stuck to refrigerators with alphabet magnets, sports posters and lacy valentines from Guess Who. It ought to be filled with summer snapshots and winter report cards, ticket stubs and souvenirs, a used encyclopedia, a library card, ice skates. Instead,

Maria's oral history flattens the features of Manny's geography into a landscape as drear as a back alley. Born 14 years ago 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. Then twice rescued; twice returned.

He spent a long time in a group home and he's been in a foster home for two years. They don't speak English. We have a very hard time placing...

She pauses and looks at us with quiet eyes. Certain deficits. Learning problems. No one's quite sure. Her voice trails off and her hands lie still on the pile of papers. I'll get you copies of the tests. But you should meet him. He's really special. You should meet him.

*

Spanish-speaking foster parents welcome us as best they can. Manny sits on the livingroom couch, his drawings on his lap. A small breeze lifts the sheer curtains at the window, three flights above an abandoned parking lot, above the sounds of skateboards and someone shouting.

about ↑ (★) why?

I love art. He speaks in English, his only language. We are at the park and Manny holds our terrier's leash and we hear birds calling.

I know my birds.

And we walk by a pond and see small fish.

Those are punkin' seeds. I like to fish.

Later he sees a red car.

Yes!

That's a Fiero. I like Fieros.

Charter and I drive the three hours home in silence.

*

"...whatever decisions you make
become fate, their alternatives
barely imaginable."

move to
epigraph
/ where's this
from?

why
italic? { Right off the bat we'd told Maria. Look. We live in New
Hampshire. There are very few dark-skinned people here. And our
other children are exceptionally bright...

She ignored us. Gently, politely. Because she had to do
something for this boy. Time was running out. She must have
sensed her opportunity when she heard us say our other
children...

*

Why worry the bureaucrats?

✓ this voice from
where?

Maria brings Manny here in a car he likes. Charter shows him
around. To the garden where late squash and pumpkins glow among
withering vines. To the pond and its wooden dock and aluminum
canoe, blue rowboat missing an oar, deflated inner tube and
rusty bait pail. Then through the woods to the river with
Adelaide bounding ahead.

It's quiet here.

Do you like that?

Oh yes. I like quiet. Noise confuses me.
The cookstove huffs. Kitchen air is apples and cinnamon. I give
Maria a tour of the house.

She takes notes. No mention of the outhouse. She has made her
decision...

*

The phone rings and

You don't know me,

the woman begins,

but I had to find your number
and call. I'm Manny's bus
driver in Springfield. He's
been on my bus for over a year

What will she tell us?

and 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.

My heart sinks

I felt real sorry for him. But the other day. It was Tuesday, I think. The most incredible thing happened.

I motion for Charter to pick up the extension

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 right down behind me and repeated it, like to the whole world. I mean it was weird. I mean I don't know you and your husband, but all I can say is from where I sit, you've changed that boy's life.

great story!

When he arrives for good, he's shouldering the beige nylon suitcase Maria had given him as a present. Everything else he

owns

fits into one cardboard box.

Manny knows he's arrived where he belongs. He walks the woods paths, as if he himself had blazed them, without map or flashlight. Any overcast afternoon. Any moonless night.

Boston. The TV cameras are here because this Wednesday's Child is their newest success story. The judge asks Manny some

pleasant questions while we stand on either side of him. She signs him over. (Later he gets an ornate birth certificate that has him the son of Marie Harris and Charter Weeks.) Then we take him and his two Barrington best friends to the Boston Aquarium and we watch a diver feed the sharks and we see a huge blue lobster and penguins and a dolphin show and get home in time to watch ourselves on the 6 o'clock news.

great!

he's in!

this section really flows nicely. Manny slipping into your life. the progression...

*Surfboard
w/ Community*

Marie Harris

FAMILY

x

My grandfather and his wife have a farm. I help them do their work.

Manny

It gets confusing when the italics hold true for different voices so close together

Charter's father invites family to lunch when he has something serious on his mind. His will. His ex-wife's finances. His daughter, vexing unmarried twin. I was his guest once.

Shortly after the sandwiches arrived, he made it clear that he expected me to produce a son to inherit the family name and the "old desk". I stared at him. At a complete loss. Then pushed back my chair and left the restaurant.

It is a great burden to me that my family name is about to disappear forever, as my son has no children.

• Silas

• Manny of the dark skin and slow mind is not his idea of an heir.

*

Charter's mother fancies herself an artist and for a time the notion of Manny amuses her.

*

this makes a bit sense

Charter's sister is a good aunt, though sad and sore *ank* preoccupied.

*

My father likes to give children nicknames, as though he were the secret author of their lives. He named me "China" in edgy handwriting on the back of baby pictures. When his eighth child impended, he was driving, as he told it, on a highway in upstate New York and saw a road sign that caught his fancy. *Herkimer*. Maureen was "Herkie" for as long as it took for Mom to put an end to it. When he meets Manny--our deliberate boy--Dad dubs him *The Green Hornet*. Manny wears that name like a patch on the sleeve of a ski jacket.

*

My mother is a shopper. She is the author of Manny's style. He loves her taste and tells her so.

*

From me Manny gets aunts and uncles, cousins by the score. But

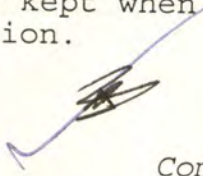
it's Annie who lends her husband and their children to Manny, understanding what we have done and who he might need...my next sister who well knows that family is a structure without a blueprint.

*

Manny gets two older brothers who fold him into their world as if he'd always been there. When Bill visits there are long hours of watercoloring and so many jokes that Manny learns how to make one. Sebastian takes him away to beaches and ice cream parlors where they talk about personal things. And hoop. Endless hoop.

*

And José, the boy a family kept when they gave Manny back. His blood, his reluctant champion.



Come on out, José. This
is where Manny lives.

Maria's passenger opens the car door and places his city shoes on the gravel one foot at a time. His eyes dart nervously from us to our house to the forest.

He is a small, skinny figure next to this blood brother. Not similar at all. He wears his straight black hair combed back and long; Manny's is short and curly. Manny's features are bold, his skin deep brown; José's face is delicate, chiseled, pale tan.

Would you guys like a sandwich?

Please. That's Manny.

I don't care. That's José. He means yes.

He asks quick questions. He doesn't smile. As evening approaches he keeps glancing at our big curtainless windows.

What kind of animals you got up here?

We all walk him to the car, everyone relieved but Manny.

Come up and stay here again. That's Manny.

His brother turns, hands shoved into the pockets of his black leather jacket, thin shoulders shrugged against a cold wind.

You know, you don't have to get adopted if you don't want to. They can't make you. That's José.

*

José keeps visiting. His only option if he wants to see his brother. He calls on the phone. It's me José. He learns how to ride the bus from Springfield and how to change in Boston.

We have dropped the two of them at the mall for a couple of hours. When we return they're standing outside. José has a stricken look on his face.

There ain't no Puerto Ricans in there!

Visit by visit he widens his world to include these woods, these people, our lives.

Keep this section on José together. you don't want too many small fragments in a row — it gets scattering. It's better when you juxtapose long w/ short.

I like this section, too — but it feels a bit incomplete. you need, I think, to thread the 1st half of this chapter together — set the scene a bit more.

maybe one small scene that these fragments can revolve around. Remember: we've just entered into this story; we need bearing markers. we're following you + we're following Manny

maybe you can show us you watching Manny
move into the family.

That's what's ~~is~~ happening now but not with
a narrator's consciousness. Keep the speaker
from the prologue — we need her consciousness,
her sensibility, to continue guiding us.

in a way, as readers, we are like Manny.
we are looking to you to cue us.

Switched
w Family

Marie Harris

COMMUNITY

Almost no one in town calls this place a commune anymore, except from habit, though it is still an island of sorts, a colony that confounds the bankers and the lawyers. Unconventional. That's all they might say about us now. And when we leave the general store, no one whispers.

More here
Visual/histor-
ical info
(2 more #s!?)

yes!

Now Manny arrives like an immigrant relative with scant knowledge of the language and customs of his family. Slowly he learns. House by house he makes his rounds.

Arthea gives him coffee and they talk. Sometimes he does her dishes. Sometimes he goes down to Jay's workshop and Jay lets him use his tools, work beside him.

Jonell serves after school tea in delicate china cups from Holland. She tells him stories about the war. *He is so sweet. Like a child. Emanuel!* Wim makes landscapes and seascapes in oil. They're artists together, don't need to talk much.

He follows a footpath through the woods to Jennifer's house, then on to Tony and Lee's. He visits John now and then. And Donna, Ann and Michael.

Dan gets annoyed when he comes out of the bathroom to find Manny sitting on his bed, and Joyce would prefer he didn't write her notes on the letters she's about to mail, still, they have let it be his second home...



Where are the friends?
my little boys asked long ago,
standing on an unfamiliar
porch the day of the move. I
waved in the direction of a
cluster of faculty houses and
they set out, trusting.

In much the same way Manny gets friends here, boys his age who let him come with them, fishing and camping, biking. Who don't mind that he mostly listens while they talk or that when he talks he says the same things over and over.

q

*

If we're away when he goes out, he writes a note because we've asked him always to leave words about where he goes.

Manny whent with Nicky to the Barrington basball feeld I will



soon as positbale OK Chart & Mom and I did the dises and put the laundry out side on the lien OK See you soon Mom and Dad

Bill Bash and Mom

I whount to go skaeting today can we do that today and whut time is Bash is comeing home today lets All go skaeting today OK Mom

*

I never hear him say What's there to do? Perhaps he says it to himself just before he sets off into the forest or arranges to meet Josh and Wes down by the Isinglass. He'll be wearing a purple and black bandana and the khaki fishing vest with its pockets and pockets. He'll be carrying his fishing pole and the pail he uses for the worms he digs from the compost pile.

A late Saturday morning in the fall. Manny goes to meet Wes and Josh at the river and will be gone for hours. Long into the afternoon, I take a walk myself. Brittle brown oak leaves are noisy under my boots. I come to a spot at a widening in the river where there's an old picnic table no one uses. Today its surface is entirely taken up with broken birch branches, carefully arranged into letters. Anyone who might wonder can see that **MANNY WHENT HOME.** *yes!*

why italic?

*

There's a little boy who lives next door. He is seven. His name is Nick. He loves to play catch with a football or a baseball. He loves to kick a soccer ball. His best friend is Manny. Manny plays with him whenever he wants. Then Nick grows up.

Now there's a baby next door in the same house. His name is Ben. Ben's mother teaches Manny how to change a diaper and how to warm a bottle. Later, Manny reads "Goodnight Moon" to Ben at bedtime. When he gets older, Manny plays catch with him almost every day. Then Ben grows up too.

*

Sometimes friends come home with Manny on the school bus and spend the night. Sometimes he rides the bus to their houses. Their names are Rob and Brian and Rich. I speak on the phone to their mothers. They tell me Manny is a very polite boy. And helpful.

✱

*

Manny would like to have a girlfriend. Now and then he thinks he does. I know because he draws her name inside a heart on the cover of his three-ring binder.

✱

(over)

I like this section a lot

but feel it needs more context
at the beginning.

what exactly is this world
Manny's stepping into?!

It might be a chance to tell a bit more
of your story (showing when you first
came — charter's life-style)

→ or when Willy + I came

again, here's a chance for you to
parallel your (the narrator's) journey
w/ Manny's

HISTORY LESSONS

~~4~~
"My name is Manny, not Manuel."

Manuel C. Case #6073 b. 3/11/70
Bureau of Public Services, Springfield,
MA, 1978

Educational Plan

Manuel needs in depth psychiatric
counseling in a stable living
environment. He needs to develop stable
personal relationships.

Children's Study Home, Springfield, MA,
1979

Referral Symptoms: firesetting,
stealing, poor peer relations, lying,
swearing, destroying property,
aggressive acting-out behavior, short
attention span.

~~5~~
Manny hauls wood to feed the house fires in winter. Short wood
for the cookstove. Long wood for the basement stove.

~~6~~
On birthdays and Christmases he gets presents from us and from
Grandma in Vermont and from Annie's family in Canada.
(Years later, Annie sends Manny a new wallet for his birthday
to replace the one she had given him that first Christmas.
It remains in its box for months and when I ask him why
he isn't using it, he replies: Oh, I can't throw the old
one away. Annie and them gave it to me.)

~~7~~
He has two kinds of skis; two kinds of skates; a skateboard; a
helmet; a radio with a tape deck and speakers; the exact
sneakers he likes; a box of oil paints and watercolors and
several pads of paper; clothes in the colors he prefers. An
allowance for posters, keychains, magazines, fishing lures...

...still he steals. Little things. Quarters from our change jar.
A couple of Wesley's plastic GI Joes. (Wesley's mother calls us
and we find the GI Joes and we talk to Manny and he is sorry and
he writes a note about how sorry he is and how he will never.)

3/12/88

and I need to stop tacking things from other people. and I need a lout of help Mom & Dad whut can I do to stop this prublem I need all the help I can get from you two to help me with this prublem whut I have right now OK

Manny lies in response to direct questions, trying to divine what answer is expected. We get used to translating.

He doesn't swear or destroy property. Nor does he act out, aggressively or otherwise.

**Children's Study Home,
Springfield, MA, 1980**

Manuel is able to attend to a task for at least a 15 minute period providing the work is on his level and he is clear on the directions. He works at a slow pace and requires constant repetition. Manuel can perform the mechanics of second grade math, but does not seem to have internalized any of the skills. He can identify coins and their value, but cannot accurately count change back from a given amount spent. He has nice handwriting and prints neatly. He will engage in conversation but speaks in a low mumble. Manny's greatest strength is in his drawing ability.

Manny's attention span is limitless when he is fishing, roller skating, ice skating, skiing, listening to music, dancing, washing dishes, stacking wood, painting flowers...

*

...and I did the dises and put the laundry outside on the lien OK Mom and Dad

Manny likes it that people need him. Everybody here needs Manny.

~~My~~
Would you please go down to the garden and toss the manure on it?

The fertilizer is spread evenly on the soil as if from a tablespoon.

Could you stack this load of wood in the shed?

Maple and oak rounds are arranged in elegant patterns.

Your turn to do up the dishes.

The dish drainer is a dripping still life, each saucer and cup placed just so, implements ranked by height, glasses by size.

*

New North School, Springfield,
MA, 1982

*It is possible to see Manny
working on an assembly line
(or possibly doing something
with his artistic talent)...*

Manny uses a chipped white china plate to mix his tubes of watercolors. He lines up the fine sable brushes that Charter gave him. He has good paper and he takes his time. He details a pitcher of daylilies, a bucket of purple lilacs, a pot of poinsettia in green foil, bunches of basil and parsley and black-eyed susans stuffed into an old glass milk bottle. The lines are strong. Sometimes the colors belong to the flowers, sometimes to him. Flowers are his only subject.

I like Monet best. Or Van Gogh.

He paints if it is close to Christmas and I have given him a list of people who need presents from him. He paints when Bill is visiting because Bill paints all the time and Manny likes Bill. He paints evenings when homework is done.

*

*Daily performance variable.
Manuel has been introduced to
telling time.*

A milder night than the sub-zero weather we've been having, but cold. I've called Samantha's mother. "If you can drop them off we can pick them up. Or we'll drop or you'll pick up or..." Manny listens to everything and understands something. And now it's midnight and Charter sits bolt upright in bed because he hasn't heard Manny come home so we call Samantha's mother ("He

insisted that you were coming for him") and we call the Dover Police and we call the State Police and we get dressed and we wait and the phone rings

"Is this Mr. Weeks? There's a young man here who says he's your son and he's lost."

and we drive to the house with the lights on and find Manny sipping cocoa in their kitchen and marvel that they'd opened their home to this dark stranger in the middle of the night.

I waited and waited but you didn't come so I started walking, and then I saw the house with lights...

*

Alarm permanently set for 6 am, he arises at wintry half light, dresses and creeps downstairs. Half asleep in the loft, we follow his progression by the small sounds. Clank of iron spoon on woodstove cover (rake the coals forward, lay on a stick or two to rekindle the fire). Cupboard door. Fridge door. A crunching of cold cereal. A whisper of magazine pages. Bells of silver and china and glass. Silence. I can hear him looking at the clock, waiting for the little hand and the big hand to come to the right place. Zipper scree. Lunch bag rustle. It takes a moment for us to realize the curtainless room is dead dark.

Manny, what are you doing?

Getting ready to go to school. (In a tone that says: Don't they know by now?)

But it's 3 o'clock in the morning!

Oh.

Inexplicably roused in the middle of the night, our boy glided into motion. Would he have stood four hours at the end of the road, shifting from foot to foot on hard packed snow, waiting for the roar of the bus as it rounded the corner?

*

He pulls on his work boots, grabs his heavy plaid jacket, fills the watering can at the sink and goes out to feed and water the chickens; returns, knocking dirt from his boots at the door, settles back to paging Sports Illustrated for Kids and we all read in a companionable Saturday morning silence.

I nurse a third cup of tea, reluctant to leave the warmth of the cookstove. But it needs more wood. And the chickens could be let into the yard. I go out into the raw day.

The perpetual murmuring that usually accompanies my raking and

wood-carrying is conspicuous in its absence. I open the door to the hen house. They are strewn about the floor like so many feather dusters. I leave the door swinging on its hinges; return, knocking dirt from my boots.

Manny, did you feed the chickens? My neutral voice causes Charter to look up.

Yes. And I filled their water pan too.

And did you notice anything? Charter puts down his newspaper. Manny brings the heel of his hand to his forehead. He is thinking.

Yes.

What did you notice? He flinches as he answers, as though to duck a blow.

They had no heads.

*

Manny comes down for breakfast. Charter is lying on the floor, knees to chest, trying to ease the muscle spasm in his back. Manny steps over him and goes to the cupboard. He pours cold cereal into a bowl and lights a fire under the kettle.

*

The winter holiday brings too many of us to my parents' house, so some of us are dispersed...to motels, B&Bs, and up the road to my aunt and uncle's house. Manny gets to stay there with cousins.

He likes his digs. The shower room with skylight. A big fireplace in the livingroom. A bannister festooned with years of laminated ski passes hung on beaded chains.

(Later he brings this to my attention. *Mom, are they all the lost children?*)

*

He calls me Mom but in my heart I know we are strangers.

*

Manuel is slowly coming to terms with his feelings of loss and abandonment.

No. He isn't.

*

You should have him tested. It could be fetal alcohol lead poisoning early childhood deprivation...

...as though, having found an expert to hang a name a syndrome a cause a label around his neck like a ski pass, we could pop up to the pharmacy...

Excuse me, miss. Which aisle has those pills that relieve Grief and Anger? Also, we're looking for the antidote to Lack of Guilt. Oh yes, and that Cause and Effect medication. Can the pharmacist help us with the dosage? Are there any contraindications or side effects?

Here your voice melts w/ Manny's — you're speaking for him (an emotional pinch hitter).

This is close to the bone!

→ a good chapter — is close to Manny — shows him, not just his surroundings.

Still, the last 1/2 page (18-19)

feels too fragmented. I need a clear, cohesive narrator's voice here

SCHOOLING

I can't handle another student!

We hear her voice through the closed door of the Middle School principal's office.

Where are we going to put him? Who's going to supervise his program?

When she emerges, no sign of upset.

*He'll need a series of tests
Peabody Picture Vocabulary CELF WISC-R
Woodcock Johnson Vineland*

We are sitting in an empty classroom on small chairs, trying to cooperate. Later she tells us Manny was cooperative overall but

*when he came up against too many
problems he couldn't solve, he pulled
his sweatshirt over his head*

and that, though his language skills are delayed by almost 7 years, his understanding of single vocabulary words is his strength

That's a Fiero.

although, for instance, he could not identify a bank of lit candles as a candelabra and could not come up with a sentence using the words *nothing* or *himself*.

*

Manny becomes a 7th grader. He chooses a black workingman's lunch box from K-Mart. He sets his school clothes out at night next to the little stack of pencilled worksheets. Every afternoon he walks home from the bus stop. Cheery.

We light single candles at dinnertime. After homework, he amuses himself with music and there's nothing wrong.

*

But the school has only a windowless room and one teacher for the special kids. This will not do. So instead of staying for 8th grade, it's arranged that he "graduate" in June and enter a new school in September as a 9th grader for two years. This summer he will have a reading tutor.

*

11/7/85

1. Milk come from a cow.
2. Ches come from cow.
3. butter come from cow.
6. Meet com from anounmoil.
10. jeille is mad of freote.

Somehow
too
dense

It is as though the amplitude of Priscilla's concern requires that fulsome body which she drapes in flowing, flowered blouses suggestive of fragrant kitchens and sunny summer mornings. From behind a long wooden desk crowded with books, file folders and stacks of lined paper, vases of wildflowers and cans of pencils, she presides over her Resource Room.

Several days into the fall semester I receive the first letter in what will become a long correspondence. It is carried in Manny's backpack--a white envelope bearing my name and, in the lower left hand corner: *Courtesy of Manny*. (Thirty years drop away at that moment. I can see my mother's precise handwriting on the notes that passed between her and the nuns of my childhood, dutifully delivered: *Courtesy of Marie*.)

So, being a "new" Mom is a delightful challenge. Manny speaks so warmly about Mom and Dad. 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 cause.

For a while, Manny will be able to finish the daily assignments in our 8th Period study hall. I shall appreciate home-time spent on review and oral reading...

From that day until the June afternoon five years hence when Manny will toss his tasseled mortarboard into the stuffy air of the high school gym, school will be as much a part of my life as his.

*

We sit side by side at the dining room table adding columns of numbers, squeezing vocabulary words into whole sentences, practicing spelling. Our evening classroom includes Charter at his drafting table, absorbing grammar lessons by default. He reminds me of those bright students who, having completed their assignments ahead of the rest, get to work independently at the back of the room.

Night after night we struggle to make sense: Manny, of the blocky type on the pages of his reader; me, of the paths his

mind chooses. I study the tight curls on his bent head. I am patient. I am the Patron Saint of Patience. I repeat. He repeats, for he, too, is patient.

One night I have to call Annie because I have hurled Manny's workbook the length of the livingroom. She tells me a story.

I was out on the deck with Julian the day before his science test. The more I 'heard' him, the plainer it became. He hadn't studied. Spring had finally arrived. On every side, neighbors were weeding and pruning, taking in laundry. And there I was, trying to cram weeks of information into one afternoon. I snapped. They heard me. Everyone in town heard me. "Vitamin C, goddammit! Vitamin C!"

Manny pats me on the top of my bent head. It's OK, Mom.

And one night Manny has to write a note because he was not patient.

12/12/85

Dear Mrs. Wilcox

I am soower i yeilled at you.

I will feic the moustacke.

I kare about you.

I well behaive in class soois I kien get good graiedss.

Love, Manny Weeks

*

He likes the subjects he learns from the people who teach him. And the people who teach like Manny. He's quiet and polite. If he makes a mistake, he tries to correct it for them, and then they praise him.

*

Our house is filling with the objects Manny makes in Shop. A round clock with a unicorn face. A mirror with a shelf. A night stand.

*

Manny is a good student. Not like those other kids.

*

Where were you born?

I was born in Puerto Rico.

What is it like there?

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

lot of birdes...

...black birds and tiny, invisible frogs--coquís-- chirping their naturally perfect sevenths. Flowering hibiscus, flamboyant trees, egrets, scuttling lizards.

We holiday there. We splash in the pale ocean, shouting like children. Bill swims underwater, one elbow a shark fin breaking the surface. Sebastian rides the waves on his belly, gulping air and salt water. And Manny. He suddenly looks Puerto Rican. Looks right at home in this place from which he was taken as a baby.

Here we are. A makeshift family on a family trip. Having a wonderful time. Sand in the seams of our bathing suits. Burnished sun settling into pink clouds on the brink of the sea.

*

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

I grow up in Massachusetts. When i was litel boy in Mass. becus me and mi foster pariens got me so mad and they hit me. becus i was get in to troubl weth my brother becus we get in to troubl a lot at home and my Dad and Mom put me in restricshun most of the day.

(Fecundo hitches a ride with a trucker out of Chicopee before daybreak. He leaves his good suit in the back of the closet. At first Iris doesn't worry because he always comes back to her. But now he's been gone too long. Iris has to think. It's so difficult to think with the babies crying and everything. There's a social worker. Maybe if she gives these two babies to that social worker for a while. Yes. Then she'll be able to think better. See, when she gave away the little girl that time, Fecundo came home again. Yes.)

I live in severl diffent houses. won of the houses i live in was a partment billding. and sevrl smaler houses and a foster kare home.

3. Why I live in New Hampshire Now. becaus i got on T.V. with Jack wellams and we whent sailing in Boston and thas how i got put on T.V. weth Jack Wellams and i ask for a Mom and Dad becus they ran away from me. and i like the aniemals in the forest a lot. and i like to fish in the river a lot.

*

Priscilla holds his hand through two ninth grade years until, at 17, he is beginning to inhabit some of the empty spaces, furnish them with opinions, invite people in.

*

In high school his teachers become my pen pals as they fill black and white composition books with assignments and notes. He takes Math Skills and English and History and Health and Biology. He takes Art but produces nothing of interest beyond a few thick clay bowls and some smudged pencil drawings. He takes Gym and Printing and Shop. His creations in wood grow larger and more accomplished. He often stays after school to help sweep up and put the tools away.

He likes all his teachers. The ones he likes best he sometimes pats on the head.

He has friends and crushes on girls.

*

(from his journal, senior year)

Sept 8, 1989

→ I like Beran he is my best freind. and we do thing to geter like to fishing go some were to eat two geter sometime I speend speand the night at his house some time. He come over to my hous to sleep over my house on Friday

Spet 11, 1989

I had to baby set on Saturday I whieoch moves. and I had puizz for dinner I had to work over the weekend and it was suny out. I whent swiming in the Pond over the weekend. and I got a move and I saw it over the weekend. I got cron for dinner and I had fun this weekend with my next door namber we play basball. I had to tack the treach to the dump so I tuck my truck to doup the traush.

Manny Weeks Date 13/1989

Today I had to go to the Dentous to get my teeth fixes after school. I whent to my Dentowes pouentment. and I came back at 5:00. right I do not fell good right now. but I will get bitter tomoueol when I go to school. ...and somebnouy help my with my homework today in school. I was so happy to get it douen.

Date 9,/18/89

Herier Caien Hugo It hit Poeit Rico the waves in Poiet Rico where veay big the roueds were cover with water the trees fell douen. the windols brock the glass heiat a boy in the heiad. the houses fell. and sheet of meidouul was flying a over the plac the people were veary skared that Hugo heiat the people had to stay in the barer to sleep. ...I hoop they will not be a stoumer agen in Poeit Rico I was bren thear with my brouther and with my brouther family. It was sad to hear about It.

9/25/89

I whent out on Saturday night with Christal. We whent to the Fair. It was fun. We whent on the rieas. and she mad dinner for my we wouch moves on T.V. Christal and I whent to the Fair.

feels like too much -
cut it down?
break it up?
hard to digest

Date 10/11/89

When I get out of high school I want to be a ski instuerter I like to ski a lout and I think skiing is fun to do.

10/24/89

I well be a Dad when I get out of high school. and I have to fieand a good job so I can pay reant, hiet, phone, for the house. I have to have a nouf money to biy gas for my truck.

Wednesday for Thanks Giving Todayes Journal 11-20-89

This weekend. I am haveing a lout of people come over to my house for Thankesgiveing this weekend and my brother mit come over my house for Thanks Giving to. so he can see me agen I mess my brother a lout. I am going to eat a lout of triuky and have a pice of ¹ appouil pie, and ² drink egg noug, ³ I am going to whoch Football on T.V. over the weekend. (and my kueiszens are comeing over...

Date 11-27-89

I had a great time with my brouther. He came to my house at 11:00. and I called Jen over the weekend about going to the moives...I had a great Thanksgivening over the weekend. I mad brifoes for my brouther. and I had to go do the dog over the weekend for a friend of my momtheres. but it was a nice day for Thankesgiveing dinner my cuosins came over and my Grandmother Louiese came to.

11-31-89

We whent sleiding on Saturday before dinner time. and Rich whouned to go coures cuntree skiing over the weekend but we did not do that.

Date 12/10/89

2. My Mom had to go to the houspitol to get something she had but she is doing great right now at home. She was asking me some thing that how I was doing in school to night. I have to write a Newes Journal for American Gov't for class. We have to do one for her so she can look at it.

Dec 12/13/89

(.now my mom feel better now and I help my friether out at home. and I got all my homework done.

12/18/89

On Monday. I whent Chiesmix shouping. I had to get somethinges for Chiesmix for my Mom and Dad and my nexesdoor namber becuse he is going to give my a Chiesmx prizent on Sunday.

WedNesday Date 1/4/90

I am whiteing litters to the people how gave my Chrismes priezents to night. and then I am going to take a shouwer to night. and to day when I got off the bus I had a cupa tie with

Marie Harris

my nambers where I live. and to night Rich is going to call my on the phouen after 6:00.

Tuesday 1/9/90

I was not feeling good at all last night. on Monday I came home with a bad herd. and I whent to sleep when I got home my tenpuercher was 1.2 (and so I did not go to school at all today and I sayed home today (and I mad a drawing today after lunch time.

*Friday 1/19/90

I am going to see my briether name Bill for a week. I mess him so much. he is my briother. So is Basten. We play baskitball.

Wensday 1/31/90

I had to get wood for the house to get the house whroem. (And my Mom and Dad had to go to a meetinges on Wensday night. And I whent over to my nexest door namber we played hocky in the house. And we had a great time.

Wednesday 3/21/90

I am geting my truck fixed. And I do not have to go to work this weekend. And tomonerol I am going to get payed by Mr Ouienal from working for him every day after school.

Thursday 3/22/90

Today is my nexst door nambers Brithday. I am going to make a Brithday card for him. For his Brithday. He is geting veary old. For a old man. I am goingover to his house to say Happy Brithday to Wim. He is like a grandfiother to my. And I am so happy for him I like him so much.

*

It is a gray, drizzly afternoon and at first I put Manny's low mood down to that. But, though he comments on the weather as sagely as any breakfast regular at Phil's Diner, Manny's take on the world has nothing to do with climate.

How was your day?

Fine.

Not his usual, Great. I push my notepad aside and look at him. His shoulders are rounded. He picks absently at his cuticles with one thumb. I make a pot of tea and bring him a cup.

Something bad happened. I didn't get in trouble. But something happened.

The radio is tuned to my afternoon jazz program. I rise and switch the station to his music. Music that makes me feel as though I am an unwilling passenger in the backseat of an electric blue Camero. Manny's fingers stop picking and begin a soft drumming.

Was it something to do with the kids in school?

Yeah.

Your friends?

No!

Other kids, huh?

Yeah. Other kids. His voice is hard. Those other kids.

My adult self can never quite shake youth's memories of rejection and lost loves, household upheavals, parental storms, friendships gone mysteriously awry. Empathy keeps me close.

I know how to be a mother. I've done it. Twice and more. Because of me, Manny can say he has a mother like the other kids. He can say

That's Marie. My mother.

I have to ask my mother.

My mother is out tonight. Can I take a message?

Your mother should call my mother.

And when they ask him what does your mother do? he can say, with some pride: *She types.*

And now, the experience I cannot share with my Puerto Rican son is the one he needs to tell. He lingers over his mug of milky tea, permitting me to quiz him. Finally...

They called me a nigger! he spits the sentence.

It was bound to happen, just as surely as if he had been fat or spoken with a lisp or walked with a limp. And what do I say about those other kids--the mean ones?

What do I say? I say

Manny! Look at me! Those mean stupid kids don't know anything! You're not a Nigger. You're a Spic!

*

Their teachers conspired. He had no date. And she had no date. But she had a dress, a tulle dress with shoes to match. "Not light blue. More a darker blue. Darker than light." All he has to do is buy her a flower. "A corsage." He says the word carefully, liking the sound of it. "The kind that goes on your hand." He spends some time at Studley's Florist, finally settling on an arrangement of small dyed carnations in a nest of shiny leaves and baby's breath. He chooses a cummerbund that

} funny -
but
problematic
will people get
the irony or
see you as
a racist?

matches the flowers.

When we deliver him, Flo comes out to meet us, scattering siblings who are building a frog house near a shallow puddle. Please come in. Parents and relatives fill the couches and easy chairs and recliners, smoking and drinking beer. The television mumbles. We shake hands. We remark on the wall-mounted stuffed bass. Flo disappears and returns with a white box. Inside, a boutonniere of the precise shade of the flowers he now affixes to her wrist. We take pictures and repair to the lawn for more pictures. In one snapshot, an elegant young man in a tuxedo, wearing my father's pleated shirt with onyx buttons and matching cufflinks, crooks his right arm for a young woman in a gentian blue gown. Her curly red hair is pulled back 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, in the gym, under a canopy of tinsel streamers, Manny crosses the foul line, waves to the audience, slides his arm around Flo's waist and dances away.

They will not speak to one another beyond this night.

*

Maria comes up from Springfield. Wim and Jonell are there. The gym sparkles with flashbulbs. Manny accepts his certificate of graduation with aplomb.

Nice! a real full chapter.

We see Manny in action — get a picture
of what it was like ^{for you} for guys — the effort,
the frustrations, the rewards

SPORTS

~~24~~

Manny loves the gear. The cleats and shin pads, the balls and bats, clubs, sticks, skis, poles, skates, goggles, hats, caps, gloves, snorkels, masks...

~~X~~

The school uniform--red shorts, red and white jersey--suits his lean body. In the photo he kneels on a green field against a backdrop of flaming maples, a black and white ball balanced on one bent leg. His curly hair is cropped close to his head and he's smiling.

*

Manny can run. On the basketball court he dashes back and forth at the edges cheering whenever anyone, on either side, makes two points. On the soccer field he's a wing, loping gracefully along the sideline, shouting encouragement to both opponents and the teammates who pass the ball to anyone but him.

*

The parking lot is studded with station wagons and pickups. Parents sell cold drinks and steamed dogs from a handmade concession stand. Umpires and coaches arrive from their day jobs and the kids warm up on dusty diamonds wearing shirts that say George Calef's Fine Foods and Lenzi Construction and The Christmas Dove and Landry's Auto Salvage and Knight's Garage.

Manny's team takes the field. He jogs into deep left, turns and crouches, punches his fist into his glove. He has it down: the stance, the determined squint, flex of throwing arm, impatient pawing of one cleated foot. Innings pass. Manny lets a pop fly drop. Manny watches a base hit become a home run. Manny runs to the dugout. Manny strikes out. Manny tosses his bat with the disgust of a seasoned player in a slump. Manny returns to the outfield. When the shortstop catches the final ball, releasing his teammates to a rush for bicycles, Manny remains for a minute, posed. As if for a baseball card.

*

When he swims in our pond, his wake is almost as delicate as a water strider.

*

We visit my parents, his Vermont grandparents, at Christmas. All his cousins go skiing so he wants to ski too. We take him to the hill for equipment and his first lesson.

Manny hunches over on the bench, staring at the black and green plastic boots on his feet as if waiting for information. Around him sleek women shepherd children bulging in their parkas like outlet shopping bags. Bright-eyed college students sling skis and boots onto the wooden counter. Snaps. Clomps. A young man shoves a ski pole into Manny's armpit, measures to his wrist, sends him in the direction of the red *Pennant B Beginner* where a young woman in a blue jumpsuit is gathering her morning's brood. We watch them go:

the small man all in black, struggling to stay upright; three little boys crossing and uncrossing their short skis; the woman with a huge white fur hat waving her pole at someone taking her picture; and Manny

tentative but looking good (*I always look good!*), moving toward the lift, standing in the way of a swinging chair that careens, catches him at the back of the knees and lofts him--skis and poles at all angles--away.

By noon the sun has softened the surface of the snow. The V's of snowplow turns pattern the gentle hill near the bottom.

Marie, look! Charter squints and points. Weaving among the multicolored bodies of the fallen, skis in parallel, body bent into the fall line, a lone shape approaches. Manny ends his run in a white spray.

I don't think he needs an afternoon lesson, his instructor says. *He's a skier.* Manny starts out at the top of the mountain now.

*Dear Garnmom and Garnpol:
Thans for have me come to
your hous at Xmas.
Love, Your Gran Sun*

*

(Winters later he gets invited to the Wednesday's Child ski race as Jack Williams' guest, we three drive to the White Mountains and Manny tears down a slope and has his picture taken at the bottom. *With Jack.*)

*

He's at the far end of the frozen pond, looping and dipping, arms locked behind his back, bending and shifting on long, supple legs. To watch him skate is like following a swallow's flight.



To watch him skate! He's waltzing under pink lights and a smog of rink music, weaving through the fabric of slower couples like

a tailor's needle. There's a pretty girl on his arm.

near perfection!

100a:

Scatter manny's journals throughout book

DRIVING LESSONS

*

Before our Town Dump became first a landfill then a waste transfer station, I'd 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 appliances, broken rakes, used tarpaper, tangled chicken wire and anything else left over from our week's labor onto the pile. Smoke of a particular, unmistakable scent drifted in the air and beer bottles exploded like muffled firecrackers.

Neighbors lingered, exchanging 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. Even I was not immune. I acquired a boy's bike this way--lacking only a pedal--, a pair of waders in need of duct tape and a dusty pink bathroom scale.

Ray the dump keeper knew just about everyone in town, by sight if not by name. *Good morning, Mrs. Rockefeller*, he'd shout as I eased our rusting truck to a stop.

It was our only means of transportation in those days, the 1965 International pickup Charter had driven twice across the country and twice rebuilt the engine. I liked driving it despite having to double clutch on the downshift and haul on the steering wheel for all but the gentlest turns.

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

*

In the summer of his 15th year, Bill took the wheel. Charter sat to the right of the floor-mounted gearshift and they set off down the driveway. Within minutes the truck reappeared with a fresh dent in the left front fender. Bill took a slow turn at the mailboxes and kept on turning. Into the phone pole.

Anybody hurt?

*

Anybody hurt? was what my Dad said as each of his ten children in turn sent moving vehicles off embankments, into drifts, caroming into other cars and skidding into ditches.

*

On a snowy Good Friday, Sebastian passed his driving test in my old blue Pinto. The following summer he was rear-ended at a red light by a licenceless, uninsured teenaged girl.

*

We both tried to teach Manny, but each lesson ended with him slumped over the steering wheel, defeated. Mr. Towle of Towle's Driving School had better success, though he did suggest that Manny take his course a second time. Mr. Towle wore a dark suit with a red tie. He drove a spiffy black Pontiac. Manny drove his spiffy black Pontiac. Down dirt roads and side roads and main roads and highways. For six weeks. (Mr. Towle is uncomfortable with failure. In his quiet way.) And on the roads for another six weeks. Manny passed the driving test. Mr. Towle is authorized to administer the written part of the test orally should he deem that necessary. He did. Manny's licence arrived in the mail.

*

The wet snow that fell last night is melting in patches. Manny drives slowly down the dirt road in the Chevy longbed we'd bought for him from a guy who owned a flooring business. He accelerates a little on the paved part. No weight in the back. Used tires. The truck begins to plane just as we reach the blind curve. When he swerves and hits the pine tree my glasses fly off my face and Manny utters the one word he's never said in front of me.

This works gorgeously !

JOBS AND MONEY

*

By the time Manny graduates high school, he will have passed a dozen training courses that could have him gardener's assistant carpenter's assistant plumber's assistant veterinary assistant day care assistant cook's assistant cleaner's assistant factory worker. He will have been taught how to read the want ads, fill out a simple application, what to say at the interview. He will know exactly what to wear (*I always look great*) and be able to explain all about good work habits.

But his crossed out forms and mumbled interviews will never be enough. We will prevail on boss after boss to give him a try. We'll drive him to summer jobs and, after he gets his licence, make sure he's on time. When he's fired for working too slowly or talking back, we'll find a different kind of a job, a new boss who might understand. When he no longer lives with us, Manny will learn about social workers and soup kitchens.

*

Manny likes money. He doesn't mind working for it and he's pleased when people give it to him for his birthday. If money exists in some neutral place--change jar bureau top washing machine car--it could be his. Paper money is confusing because when he pays with it he's never sure how much he gets back. Manny understands quarters.

*

Manny opens a bank account because we are teaching him to save.

*

The fair comes to Rochester's shabby north end while the days are still warm and the last of summer's breezes tease the night air.

(By day quilts hooked rugs jams and jellies baked goods perfect ruby beets prize roosters and ducks 4-H-ers napping on hay bales beside their lambs and heavy uddered cows. At night harness racing rides games of chance knots of boys and skeins of girls.)

I was thinking, Manny says as he rinses his dinner plate. Josh and them are probably going tomorrow night. Edging toward his point. I was thinking about going. And Charter tells him. Fine. Go up to the bank after school and take \$10 out of your account.

Manny puts his green savings passbook and a yellow withdrawal slip into his back pocket. *See you shortly,* he says, just the way Charter always does when he leaves the house. When Josh and

them arrive, Manny comes down dressed in jeans, a short sleeved red shirt and a bandana tied around his head. Charter tucks a five in his pocket. *Have a sausage and pepper sub for me.*

All week, each evening before supper and homework, Manny goes to the bank. Each evening, after supper and homework, Manny goes to the fair. Night after night he returns with stuffed bears and Snoopys, posters, keychains, mugs. *I won. I won again.* He gives away his loot. To us, to the neighborhood children.

And then I happen upon his bank book, the gray numbers--\$10. \$60. \$25. \$90. in total: more than \$400--

--Manny, how could you possibly have spent this much money?

Head bowed, shoulders collapsed, on trial...he can't say. So we send him to his room to think and tell the truth. And he comes back down in a while. He says: *I bought marijuana.*

This explains it.

From whom?

From Josh and them.

So we confront Josh and it isn't true and really Manny has spent his entire summer's earnings at the fair--balls and darts and hoops, rides and rides for friends, twenties handed out, change stuffed in his pocket, uncounted.

Charter looks at me and says *He must have felt like a king.*

*

(a) *Stealing is when people take money from them and you get in deep trubol that you end up in joil.*

(b) *NO it is not good to take a little becuas you will get a puneshment when you steal ageen from your family.*

(c) *if you tak anneything from your friends they will not like you as a frend for a lung time.*

(d) *Becuse it is a bad habit to steal becus you will get into so much trubol from your family.*

(e) *If i need money I shud aske my Dad or Mom for sume money. or i can get money out of the bank.*

TRAVELING MAN

*

Manny makes neat piles of clothes and supplies, checks off each item on the list they sent from Bear Brook 4-H camp. We've signed him up for one week in case he gets homesick.

Manny calls shortly into Day 4. Can he stay? (His voice says: *For the rest of my life?*)

The counselors write that ^{Manny}he knows his birds and animals. He swims very well. He is very polite. Also neat and helpful. He relates well to adults. He has trouble establishing peer relationships.

*

The summer soccer camp takes place on the campus of a private school. Manny says he liked it, but early on he got a large blister on the ball of his right foot so he didn't play much. But he did help the coaches a lot.

We wait with him at departure gates and bus terminals. Someone is waiting at arrival ends. ?

Outward Bound

In my mind I see you, standing quietly beside your pile of gear while everyone around you is talking talking. And then the vans and the drivers and the checklists and you follow. But now you've found the young man who's leading the expedition and you help him load packs onto the roof rack while the other kids are jockeying for the best seats and arguing over something you don't understand or care about because you want to make sure everything's OK like the straps and the door latches and you sit beside your friend and you don't talk because the young man has fallen asleep on your shoulder.

The Boundary Waters. Before you left we located that cluster of pale blue shapes on the map, a knotted scarf of lakes between Minnesota and Canada. That's where you are now. In a canoe. Or portaging around rapids. Or in a tent. And it's beginning to rain. Or the morning sun is knifing the ground fog. Or the moon is rising between stark black pines.

The Test. They drop you off on a spit of land with a tarp and some matches and whatever you have stowed in the fishing vest your Grandma gave you last year for Christmas.

I'm not worried, Manny. You know your birds and berries. You

Marie Harris

know your fish. You know that the owl is not hunting you at night. You know the deer can drink, undisturbed by your presence, and the otters will play as if you were not there. This is your territory. You have never been afraid of the natural dark.

The Flight Home. Has been delayed by a storm. I'm worried now, Manny.

The Minneapolis airport is noisy and you've never liked noise and the young man has said goodbye and you haven't quite caught his last instructions so you shoulder your damp gear in the general direction but you don't exactly know and you won't ask and you miss and you wait and while you're waiting you think about otters diving and how, when your test was over, someone came and took you back to camp and offered you a bowl of stew.

} why
Helen?

this
is
a
confusing
transition

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 our new cousin 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 Xavier'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 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

*
SHORTEN
- excerpts

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 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,

Marie Harris

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 & family & Bash that their coming too would make everything perfect.

Love & xxxx

Annie, George & the gang

*

We found Manny at the luggage carousel waiting for his skis. His hockey skates were slung over one shoulder. His duffel bag was at his feet. But instead of smiling when he saw us, his eyes filled with tears. He began to speak incoherently.

*

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.

Sincerely,

Warren B. Rudman

United States Senator

WBR:ec

Enclosure

Apr 07 1989

Senator Warren B. Rudman
United States Senate

Nice!

need to connect
better - a bit hard
to follow

Marie Harris

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.

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.

Marie Harris

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

*

March date 3/6/89

Dear Annie, George, Xavier, Anna Kirsten. 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. The school was nice I like a lout.

Thankes for the prisezes 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.

March date 3/6/89

1 Dear Xavier: I had fun with you whch 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.

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 Xavier

See you Xavier. right back soon OK I whunt to hear eveathing about it.

*

I put him on the last plane out of Logan before ice and fog

closes the place. He arrives in Seattle to more snow than that city had seen in years. He has a good time with his brother Bill. Bill's family doesn't quite know what to make of him. He keeps telling the girls they ought to help their mother more. And not to fight. He does dishes all the time. And homework. He paints when Bill paints.

a bit
hurried —
more

*

(Charter and I have many wonderful holidays. Just the two of us.
Nice!

This is a good, full section
that lets us see more of Manny —
his world expanding
+ though I like the letters in this section,
I'm a little lost w/ all the switches
in perspective

Still, this is really flowing along

I'm caught up in Manny's story
(what will he do next?)

✓ RITES OF PASSAGE

I can't go home anymore.

~~He~~

He has never defied us. Now this. I was away. I hear it when I return

his father's decision not to allow him to drive to Robert's over icy March roads. His disappearance with the truck into the night. And gone the next night and the next. Not far, but, it turns out, far.

Then the Sunday. About time to fetch Manny home. Charter goes. (*Should I have?*) But he doesn't want to come. And Rob calls the cops because Rob is accustomed to calling cops and the cop arrives as Charter and Manny are getting into the car and he says what's going on here and he says is this boy over twenty one and if so he can do whatever he wants and Charter says you don't understand but the cop doesn't care to understand and Manny says he wants to stay so Charter leaves without him.

Now I'm in the Barrington Police Station which shares its space with the ~~Barrington~~ Public Library. It's noon. Rob and Manny are slumped in orange plastic chairs in the waiting area. The Chief says why don't you and Manny go into the other room where you can have a private conversation and I ignore Rob who's been like a second son or at least a pal and Manny and I go in there together, past a plastic NO SMOKING sign and I glance at the Chief, who shrugs, but in a few minutes there's a knock on the door and a young officer delivers an ashtray.

Manny is clenching and unclenching his fists, grinding his knuckles into his forehead. His words come out on shallow breaths. He is suffering. I cajole. I empathize. I question. I am gentle. I am stern. It's no use. I am trapped in a small room with an implacable stranger who keeps repeating: I can't go home anymore.

OK, Manny. Do what you need to do, but I'm going to have to take the truck is there anything you need out of it? And Manny thinks and then he says the radio and I say I'm afraid the radio goes with the truck and I leave the both of them, Manny and Rob, to figure out how to get wherever it is they're going next.

*

Manny shows up around five o'clock. I've come to get my stuff, he says. And I say how did you get here and he says Rob and them. They're waiting for me at the mailboxes. And I think good thing they don't dare show their faces here. And Manny goes up to his room and turns on the radio. Half an hour. An hour and still the music and the sound of drawers opening and closing. (I

don't say: *Hurry up, your friends are waiting.*) Manny's humming. Another hour. Finally he comes down lugging two suitcases, his red string laundry bag and the stuffed Tasmanian devil. Bye, Marie. Bye, Chart. As though he were off to 4-H camp. He hugs us.

After he leaves, I retrieve the green passbook--almost seven hundred dollars Manny had saved up--and toss it into the woodstove. I won't make it easy for him to bankroll his friends.

*

9:45 The law arrives in our driveway, blue lights flashing, followed by a beat-up vehicle. *Your boy here wants to get his bank book.* It's gone, I say. Oh, says Manny. Go on, I say. Goodby, Manny. The officer leaves us his card and Manny returns to the beat-up vehicle. They pull out.

*

SACKS

*More to beginning
(epiphany)*

We are not selfless or perfect. But we try to provide. So you did your duty. You packed a lunch. Beyond wrapping his fingers around the sack and starting him out the door in the morning, you can't go. Your griefs are your own. We hardly ever get to go back and pick up the pieces, repack the lunch....

Laurel Spear

*

Whatever we have managed to teach him is all he has now: a kind of cardboard box filled with souvenirs of a family life.

*

(Adelaide--game terrier of happy memory--chose an invisible line beyond the hand pump, halfway between house and woods. Up to that point she would hear us calling and so have to return; past that, she went deaf and proceeded on journeys of her own devising.)

!!

*

He will come home. And leave again, though no further than the next town over. He will inhabit shabby rooms on second floors over unkempt yards littered with automobile parts and broken bicycles. We will help him furnish bedrooms and livingrooms, stock kitchens with pots and plates. He will sell his furniture, abandon used televisions and crusted frying pans. He will have jobs and he will be homeless.

*

José moves up from Springfield leaving behind a girl and their child whose photo he wears as a button on his jacket. For a time they live together at 47B, but José tells him what to do and Manny is the older brother so that doesn't work and José moves in with his new girlfriend. The place fills up with underage kids who get Manny to buy their beer and cigarettes at the corner store.

He gets fired from his job at the nursery, evicted from the apartment. He goes from friend to friend. It's summer and we stop intervening.

There's this place, Marie. A church. You just go there and they give you dinner. (And your parents pay them back.)

RESCUE

*

It's almost September. Manny continues to eat at soup kitchens.

The application has been in at the Job Corps for almost a year. The weeks drag on and still no word. Now a new Job Corps person calls with her new agenda. She says she's reviewing the applications. She wants it all again...the IEPs, the psychological evaluations...it's possible that his disability will disqualify him.

Who do we know? What can we do? No one. Nothing.

I go to sleep slowly, scrolling through my random access memory which delivers an answer in the morning. Sargent Shriver. He'd written Mom a note when Dad died. They'd been friends long ago. I send a letter and three watercolors.

The day after Manny is accepted into the program, a secretary from Mr. Shriver's office calls. Is everything OK? Can Mr. Shriver be of further help? She adds that Mr. Shriver has recently been at the National Gallery and he couldn't resist comparing Manny's work to Van Gogh.

Van Gogh, I say, is Manny's favorite painter. After Monet.

*

Date
10/10/93

Sunday's note

Dear Mom and Dad: I am haveing a somewhut time here at the old Dorm It is getting vear bad at this places And I miss Dover N,H so much. (.And Mom and Dad I got my Class "A" Pass at the old dorm.) And also I got two pices of paper from the job corps Center (.And I am vear happy albout it albout the job I have ben doing in the job Corps Center.) And I got three thinges I did gerat on in the job corps Center.) (.And I am doing all the things in the old Dorm Mom and Dad (.And I heard a lout of bad thinges in this place Mom and Dad.) (.And thay are druges, and people geting into fiteing with people.) And thas how I do not like this places Mom and Dad.) I rather get a job in now N,H, like Dover N, H, whear my Bruother Jose is right now Mom.) (.And Mom I am going to send you this thing of paperes in the mayold OK Mom and Dad Hi! I miss you two so much And I miss my bruother Jose alout

too quick?

Marie Harris

*

Thresday night note Date 10/14 93

Dear Marie Harris: I am haveing a bad time whear I am. (And I whunt to go home and stay thear in Barrington, NH on Thankesgiveing for good.

And Mom I need more monye \$

*

Soon everyone moves into the new campus.
Just like college. Just like Bill and Sebastian.

Satrerday 11/20/93

...and tell Nick that I am doing veary great in the job Corps Center in Bangor M.E.

*

When we visit he shows us his dorm and the gym. Wherever we go they say Hi, Manny and How's it going, dude. He gets a paycheck and bonuses and special privileges. He passes courses in Building & Maintenance. He gets a girlfriend.

At first he comes home on the bus for holidays. But soon he's calling to ask if he can stay. For Easter. Then Fourth of July. For Labor Day and Thanksgiving. They need me here. Until his whole life is in Bangor with my teacher Mark and them becaus we're making a gazebo and we're helping to put staers on an old ladys house and we're going up north to work on something and I and I'm doing veary good in my woodshop class, Mom and Dad, and I will give you two pichers of what I am dong in my class. Love, Your Sun.

for two years. And then it's over.

I'm late to meet him at the bus station. He's standing on the sidewalk among a pile of duct taped boxes smoking a menthol cigarette. His sadness is such that he can hardly speak on the drive home.

great sections!

(Rate of passage — Rescue)

new title!

Marie Harris

THE WORLD OUTSIDE US

*

The blue Chevy step side truck is his Job Corps graduation present. With it he can drive to a job that he'll surely get what with his enthusiastic letters of recommendation, his new skills. And make extra money on weekends doing odd jobs if he wants.

The studio apartment should be just right. We shop for a used TV. New cutlery. A bed and a red beanbag chair. Manny buys the paper every day and puts circles and underlines on the Help Wanted page. Randomly.

We know someone who needs a carpenter's helper.

A few months later we know someone who knows someone who has a business cleaning offices and banks at night.

It's going wrong. Manny waits for Mark to call and tell him he can come back to Bangor. He begins drinking. He trades his truck for a junk Ford and \$150 to a man who writes up a bill of sale on the back of a high school yearbook page and Charter spends the better part of a summer night with the guy in a sweltering little kitchen on the back side of Dover, crowded in by mocking teenagers, maneuvering for its return.

Manny moves in with a girl and her boyfriend but he won't pay her for rent or food and she calls us daily to complain about the money and the booze and she can't understand because she's been good to him...

*

He gets a job in a shoe factory. Quality Control. Jonell gives him her old car. He moves in with an old lady who keeps parrots and dogs and cats in every room of her house. In winter they cause him to wheeze. We hear about him from José or the girl with the boyfriend.

He takes up bowling. He pays for pool games at the social club for recovering alcoholics by sweeping the place on Saturday afternoons. He goes dancing at Pure Platinum and buys drinks until his money runs out.

"I'm on my own now"
Manny doesn't need us anymore. Except for . . .
Manny is He only needs us for wisdom teeth, tax forms, car papers and car repairs. For emergencies.

*

add somewhere in this section
"Selling"
the truck

In the courtroom, in wooden benches, three women fidget as if they were early arrivals at a baptism. One of them has snapshots of a baby tucked in her purse. (She tells me this in a whisper.)

Manny and I are in the judge's chambers. The judge is speaking slowly, deliberately. Manny, do you understand the meaning of the word *oath*?

Manny thinks.

How old are you? Where did you go to school? Are you a good driver? What's your job? Do you know a young lady called Kimberly? Did you have sexual relations with her?

I had picked Manny up at the shoe factory. He hadn't shaved and his work clothes smelled faintly of glue. I wanted to tell the judge that Manny was a good dresser, a boy who looked after himself. I also wanted to say he was a painter of flowers in the manner of Van Gogh. I wanted to speak his answers for him because words come slowly to Manny and he tells people what he imagines they might want to hear. But I remained silent.

Manny rarely lifts his head when he's being questioned. About anything. He never knows. Better to wait until they tell him what to say. But there are some things about which Manny has no doubts. No doubts at all.

I am a very cautious driver! he says, looking up.

When it is all over and Manny signs his complete formal name in cursive on the line and, with the judge's permission, adds the date. The judge says do you have any questions and Manny says yes.

I've been thinking. Will the child's new parents take care of him and make sure that he will be able to be on his own someday?

Out in the parking lot, Manny says *that was nervous wracking* and he says, again and again as is his habit, that he had been thinking about that a lot. And I say that one of the ladies in the courtroom told me that the little boy had new parents who loved him and they went to church and Manny thought that was good. And then I say would you like to have a coffee and he says sure and we stop at a pizza place in Gonic and Manny says I've passed this place lots of times on my way home from work and I never knew it was here and we look at their fish tank and I say we've seen some of these fish in the Caribbean and he says Puerto Rico is the Shining Star of the Caribbean and then he orders a small chicken sub and we talk about AIDS and condoms and not having children by mistake and I drop him off at his car in the shoe factory parking lot and we hug and he says thanks Mom.

This is Cyndi? Manny's new girlfriend?
Are you his mother?
Do you take children?
I heard you take in children?

No, Cyndi. I know what you're thinking, though. This lady and her husband took in Manny. I know. Manny told Penny and Penny told me all about it. This lady and her husband do adoptions and I have three kids and I think I'm pregnant again and I can't I can't I can't. This lady could take all my kids and I could start again and Manny could be my boyfriend and we could go to the club and we could dance all night.

This is how it would go if I ran the circus. There'd be a woman I'll call her Cheryl. She's 33 and has two pre-school children by a man who abused her. She's finally got free of him (I have him out of jail and moved to another state somewhere in the midwest). She holds down a good first shift job at a plastics factory and the kids are in a daycare situation she trusts.

(Cheryl grew up in a small town just across the border in Maine. Her parents love her and feel helpless, sometimes. Every other weekend they take the kids so she can have a night out.)

One Saturday Cheryl sees Manny at the bowling alley. She likes looking at him when he bowls. His long legs and easy arm. He notices her watching and invites her to bowl a string or two. She helps him with the scorecard and then they have a beer. Understand that Cheryl is in no hurry to add another man to her life, but Manny...

he takes to dropping over and he's content to play with her kids for whole afternoons while Cheryl cleans house and then she asks him to stay for supper and he does up the dishes afterward and she begins to like him all the while realizing that there are certain things Manny doesn't do too well but, after all, she knows how to balance a checkbook and Manny does get those kids to sleep faster and easier than she ever could and he's patient and quiet and loving and

well, you get the picture.

**Manny...*

Summers ago we all converged on a level spot in our woods behind Tony's house and in a weekend built a cabin for his mother without benefit of building inspector or permit. Pine-simple as our own first dwelling. A place where she could read and sleep, eat and drink red wine. Away but close enough.

Charter tells me I would regret it if we were to make such a cabin for Manny.

*

Esquire magazine rounded up a few bums in that time when they were still bums, not The Homeless. A bevy of bright young women trimmed the beards and styled hair, decked them out in tweeds or evening wear, accessorized (silver-tipped cane, ascot, beret, the single red carnation) and posed them (one, whose teeth were beyond repair, directed not to smile) against the backdrops of privilege. Perhaps they enjoyed fine coffee and good port, smoked Cuban cigars and made long distance calls before they were returned to the streets. I wonder if they were permitted to keep the new clothes.

*

Manny used to wear the gray slacks and blue blazer, white shirt and muted striped tie for funerals and weddings. In summer, the same outfit without the tie, shirt open and a vest, a pair of soft leather shoes and special black socks. He could converse with strangers, gracious, relaxed against any backdrop.

We keep these clothes in a zippered plastic bag--tie looped on a hanger with the vest--for when the next family member marries. Or dies.

*

In the attic, his skis and ice skates, roller skates, skateboard. Some of his paintings, shrink wrapped. A baseball bat and mitt. Soccer cleats.

Our other sons have stowed boxes here as well. To reclaim. So why do I look at Manny's stuff and think: Goodwill.

*

He hasn't been the same worker since Tony left. The new boss has given him three warnings so far. We have no choice but to let him go.

*

Jennifer calls. Can I come over?

A month ago when I was away Manny came by and he left a note as he always does about how he hoped I was having a good time. Signed Your Friend, Manny C. Weeks. And now I get this canceled check made out to him for two hundred dollars and signed by me. It looks just like my signature! Did I write him a check?

Some time after Manny has finished scraping the paint around her

storm windows, Nancy is missing her silver spoon. *By any chance?*

Joyce calls, apologetic. Manny has been helping her with some chores. There's a gold chain gone from Lena's room and the money she was saving for her trip. *Could it be?*

On a hunch, we unearth Charter's coffee can, the one he stashes, chipmunk fashion, in a hole in a boulder to hold the hard cash he's certain we'll need when everything falls apart. It's empty save for a ziplock plastic bag. *Is it possible?*

that our Manny has been a one-man robbery ring?

Caught. Confronted. He is sorry. He writes notes to everyone saying he is sorry. He decorates them with pictures and signs them *Your Friend, Manny*. For he is our friend Manny. He is safe with us.

Joyce installs locks on her doors for the first time in twenty five years; her family has problems remembering where the keys are. Jonell watches out for Manny's truck and stops asking him to tea. Jennifer makes it clear he is no longer welcome in her home.

*

Tonight Manny arrives to pay us his installment for stealing our money. I fix him an iced tea. We have a chat about the weather.

Then he pulls out a set of shiny keys on a round plastic Blue Seal key ring and sets them on the table. He tells us that he's gotten his car keys copied, just in case. Something to praise him for. And we praise him.

In order to keep our brief conversation alive, Charter tells him about the moose he and Wim saw swimming across our pond the other morning and he says *Now that's unusual* and he says *I saw Jonell on my way in and I waved*. He finishes his drink and the menthol cigarette he had tucked behind his ear and goes on his way.

FUTURES

*

He wouldn't take off his coat or hat, ^{Charley} she said, but he accepted a cup of coffee and then he told me very politely that it was the worst coffee he'd ever tasted. I think he had come for a birthday gift so I chatted with him and presently wrote out a check for ten dollars, expecting him to take it and leave.

But instead he took off his ^{baseball cap} hat, and unzipped his jacket and asked for another coffee with extra milk and sugar. We talked for quite awhile then. You know how deaf I am in my left ear and Manny speaks awfully quietly but what I heard had to do with friendship and loneliness.

who is this?

*

These days, Manny's drinking less. Still living up the road in the old lady's farmhouse with her caged birds and feral cats, the barking dog chained to its plywood house, chickens, geese...

...she washes his clothes and asks nothing of him. I just love him to death. I wake up when he comes home late and I make him eggs and bacon. They tell me I'm crazy to do it, but I like to...

and he doesn't pay for food or rent. Now and then he mows her lawn or shovels the driveway.

*

Manny's showing up here more and more. He rakes the yard clean of oak leaves. He trucks them into the woods, pile after pile in a blue plastic tarp, using an ingenious knot system that permits him to shoulder an Atlas load as if it were a knapsack, as if he were not Sisyphus. And he says Chart, I think you need help stacking that wood. And he says The mulch I got for your garden looks good, Mom. And he says Dads and Moms are lucky to have sons to help them.

*

Manny's sipping a cup of tea with honey and lemon the way he knows I fix it for myself. He's come to borrow money against the paycheck he'll be getting for the new job he's landed all on his own washing dishes in a restaurant in the mall for a lady boss starting Monday 5 to 9:30. Charter says Great. You're really getting good at making it on your own. We're proud of you. Then we start talking about the spotted salamander he and I saw yesterday which leads Manny into a little reminiscence about one he saw in the woods a long time ago. We get out the book and he says yes, that one, pointing to the Marbled Salamander and he

goes on, as he will, about how he said to himself hmmm, what's this? etc. I ask him if the dentist (surgeon, he says in the gently admonishing tone he used to use when I said car instead of truck) took out the wisdom tooth stitches and that leads him into a memory riff about the other infected wisdom tooth that had his right cheek swollen and his eye almost shut and how the dentist said it's a good thing I caught it in time otherwise you could have had serious brain damage. We give him a tall bottle of the maple syrup he watched us make last week and he takes one of our Post It notes and writes Dad 10:30 and affixes it to the bottle

(just how much)
and suddenly I realize I have come to love this boy who signs his notes to us
Your one 3thred sun Manny.

an
~~in~~
incredible
understanding,
a stunning
admission

*

Manny hesitates at the screen door
comes back to hug us
and goes out into that long day
he awakes to every morning
as surprised as if it were
the very instant of creation
sudden and inexplicable
a world with nothing in it to regret
nothing
to remind or predict.

yes!

change

Mom — this is your story as much as Manny's.

I think you've got yourself a book here

The only thing that feels like it's missing is your full voice. I hear it in fragments, but I want more.

(more on this later)

but you should be happy + proud.

a real page-turner. How did you get it so stripped down, so essential?

Note re
Spelling

p. 2 Prologue
add

p. 9~~8~~ (Community)
extra poem.

p. 10~~9~~ journal entries here re friends?
girlfriends?

p. 12 fix

pp. 12-14 "incomplete"

look at Sebastian's notes

p. 16 Everybody needs Maury

→ little poem here

pp. 19-20 Bass's comments

p. 22

" "

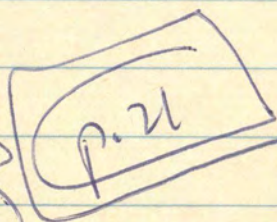
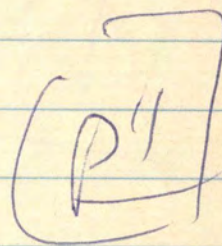
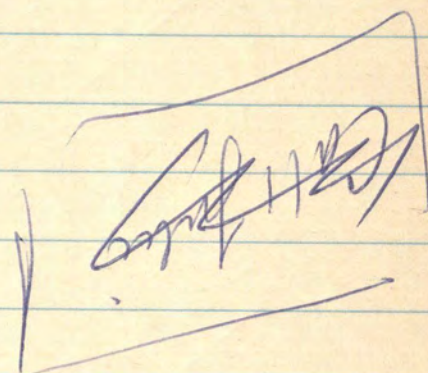
p. 24 - Fernando

pp. 25 -

move into text

p. 28

p. 29 (ent) fuller



p. 34 — move this section to nearer school
no title?

p. 41 Seattle — longer.

p. 44 Shower — longer

p. 45 longer

p. 46 more.

Mo & The landscaping job?

Ms
Mama-san—

Congratulations! You have a great little book here. I enjoyed reading and re-reading it. **Your Sun, Manny** not only gives a vivid portrait of Manny but also of you and your efforts to raise him. Manny moves through these pages like a skater drifting around a winter pond: though not going anywhere in particular, he looks wonderful figure-eighting his way over the black ice.

I have made semi-extensive line edits, but let me give a break-down of my general response in this letter. Starting with the "Prologue," I think you hit the right note by getting into your own life first. This is crucial, for the reader must know who they are listening to. They need to be able to trust you, to see you exposing yourself before you drag Manny out into the spotlight. You do this. And you do it quite beautifully and sadly.

As your son, it makes me sad that you still feel this way. I want you to let it be, as the Beatles so aptly put it. And I know you have (remember our pact about the past!). But, for the book, this kind of admission, this little bit of autobiography, is key. I'd like to see a little more, actually. maybe more about Charter, your life there. As it is, you come across a little bit scattered, in need. It seems to me the irony—the great beauty—of the story, is that you let Manny into your lives just at a point where things were perfect, replete. There was no room at the Inn and you let him in, anyway. Now that's poignant!

"Wednesday's Child" opens Manny's story nicely. It's a great scene. You have really captured the essence of that moment in time, that transition in your lives. Manny makes his entrance. Saved at the last minute, he steps into your world like Chance the Gardner, confident, gracious, oblivious. You and Charter come across like extremely generous people: open, loving, game. Naive angels out on an emotional shopping spree. That you went with Manny despite all the cultural red lights going off says so much about you two. It sets the moral tone of the book the way Manny's first utterance "I know my birds" introduces the main character. We have begun. (God help us all!)

(thought: That "Family" and "Community" get switched so that we stay with Manny and your world a bit more—the immediate arena—before broadening out. On a strictly Hollywood level, you've just introduced the "staaar." Now we want to follow him around a bit, get our bearings in his world. I see why giving the family players some air time would make sense, but maybe the need for immediate context should take precedence.)

"Family" moves too quickly for my taste, feels a bit too fragmented. Except, that is, until you introduce Jose, who jumps onto the page. That's great, full vignette. (It balances out the piece, as well.) But maybe you need a few small vignettes, or scene flashes, inside this family litany. Charity gets a line: why not a brief, 3-sentence description? Why not a look at Charter and Manny together, maybe Charter showing Manny the ropes? Why not some little moment in Manchester? Otherwise, I'm quite happy with this section. You have become a master at providing the needed background info and color with the minimum amount of brush strokes. This book is a wonderful fusing of your **Interstate** style with that of **Weasel in the Turkey Pen**.

(thought: I get a little confused by your use of italics and the different voices popping up. I love the way these voices inform the book (maybe the best part!) but need some clarification here and

there. See the line edits for examples. I also want you to be careful of breaking up these fragments too much. You want some longer sections in between, otherwise you risk creating a literary version of channel surfing.)

As you know, this story is not just Manny's but also *yours*. That even though you've managed to push yourself off to the side, your take on things is as important as Manny's actions. One informs the other. You are our camera. This said, I urge you to put yourself in this book more. Not a lot, just at crucial points. For example, throughout "Family" you stay behind a semi-objective screen, withholding judgement until the end when you say simply: "visit by visit, we widens his world to include these woods, these people, our lives." That's beautifully understated. But maybe you can balance this out by giving more of yourself in the opening of "Community." You give us only a small, straight-forward paragraph to set the scene. That's not enough. Here's a perfect place for you to step out from behind the screen and give us more of your Self. You began something in the prologue, here's a chance to pick it up again. Tell us about your world. Then you can jump right back into the big story with "Now Manny arrives..."

*(Idea: You might want to find a cool symbol like * to go between the fragments, maybe one that looks more like a sun.)*

"History Lessons" seems fine to me. At the end, you're doing some amazing stuff. You've begun to speak for Manny, not in an appropriating sense but empathetically. It's beautiful. You're his emotional pinch hitter. Still, I want more narrative cohesion here; it feels too fragmented. When you start bringing your own voice in, you should shift the style away from the fragments (more into the longer prose-poem paragraph you do so well). I don't think the italics alone will carry it because you've used italics already for other ends.

"Schooling" is more problematic. It starts off with a nice tempo but bogs down on page 21 with your description of the teacher. That little bit needs reordering. Then it really rolls along for awhile. At page 24, however, you switch over to the senior year journal, and I get stalled. It's too hard to digest that much of Manny-speak. Anyway, it doesn't feel right. I don't want that much of Manny's private life on display here. Is there a way for you to cut this down, maybe even break it up? Maybe throughout the chapter, maybe through the book, in between sections. I don't know. Just something to break up this heavy dose of Manny consciousness.

The "nigger-spic," incident, though funny, also feels problematic. I don't think people will necessarily get the joke. They make think you're some racist redneck. Maybe I am just being too politically correct, but...

On the whole, though, if you figure out what to do with the journal, this section is complete. It feels like we are at the heart, or dead center, of this book.

"Sports" just sings! As does "Driving Lessons." (Though the repeated "lessons" in the titles feels a bit off.)

"Jobs and Money" feels flat. Not bad, just filler. Could you punch it up a bit? I really like Charter's line, "He must have felt like a King." It should end the piece, which, as is, ends anti-climactically with Manny's a-e listing of why stealing is bad. Maybe that could open the piece?

"Traveling Man" might be the most ambitious section in the book. A lot goes on. I am not always able to keep up with your transitions, though. The switches in perspective come fast. See line edits. This chapter really works—it just needs some clean up.

(note: I love the variety of voices and media you put in this book. You've got journal entries, letters, notes, dialogue, inner thoughts, commentary, reports, etc. It makes for exciting reading. You should add photos and other visuals!)

Now we are at the turn in the book. We are fully engaged in Manny's story and are asking ourselves, *What will he do next?* The title "Rites of Passage" (which I think should be "Rite") comes at us perfectly, setting us up for the next transition in your lives. The opening lines keep this dramatic shift going, then straight into the story... *You could have been a screenwriter.*

On page 44 you do some real interesting shit. You give us a brief, italicized reflection, then a one sentence commentary, then a parenthetical aside about Adelaide, then a list of things that Manny "will do" then a last section of reportage, culminating in the snippet of Manny's voice and your own voice blanketed in parenthesis. Wow! This is literary pyrotechnics! You've managed to put across a whole scene, a whole shifting world, a whole chapter of a story, in five or six brief paragraphs. Your switches here are perfect montage cuts. Bravo!

"Rescue" moves too quick. The Sargent Shriver story deserves more air time. Slow down at tell it. Otherwise, you are on a real roll here.

"The World Outside Us" is also ambitious. It may be holding too much, trying for too much. I can't tell yet. The whole thing about him fathering a kid is incredibly sad and moving. It might need some breathing room. As is, we roll right past it almost before the reality hits us.

"Nervous wracking" should be the next big slang on the streets. "Man, I was nervous wracking!"

Your "If I ran the circus" also needs its own space. I'm not sure how you might redo this, or if you should at all. But it feels convoluted.

"Futures" ends stunningly, with an incredible admission. Whatcha think of changing the wording from "I realize I have come to love" to "I realize *just how much* I have come to love"? It alters the tone a bit, softens it.

(note: I'm confused by who is speaking at the opening of "Futures," as I sometimes am in relation to your italic sections.)

Still, a miraculous ending. I like how it circles back to your consciousness. It's Manny at the door, but it's your door. Just like the title is "Your Sun, Manny." It's Manny speaking but you he is addressing.

So, in review: you've got a book. the structure is right. some small aspects need work (the size and variety of your fragments, the italic sections need clarifying in places, maybe a rethink of the ordering of certain chapters). you need to put more of your voice in this story, more of your story. not a whole 'ell of a lot, just snippets in the right places. I want to see more of Charter, more of your emotional reactions. Manny is a great, realized character. You write about him compassionately but with just the right emotional remove. There's aesthetic intimacy here, and that's the tough balance I think you fought to achieve.

I am curious to see what the guy at New Rivers thinks. Let's talk soon.

Love, your moon, Sebastian "Lefty McGee" Matthews

Sm

January:

new skis for Manny

B & B Xmas in Caribbean with B and Mary and Bill

Bill to NH for a week...had left Santa fe, on to Seattle

Bash in LA with Susan...writing/reading scripts...bookstore

Feb:

14th Yankee Clipper Inn

Louise and her eyes (dr Richmond)

Manny skiing with Deke's ski club (21-24 trip to Canada)

March:

11th Manny's b'day 18 years old

Cathy S rejects us

April:

Jose's visit (first time in a year...new son)

Manny psych testing (at community house) see letter to Paul C.;
see results sheet

Toronto to see Anne & George: McMichael/Mus of Hist of Medicine

GIFT reviews positive

Articles from the France trip

still not smoking

May:

Manny's vacation: a week in the woods with Josh, etc.

Louise's cataracts

Dad's lung cancer

5/7 hit by a canoe HS workshop

5/17 the h&h plants for the bank

Win back from CA and divorce

Save the Swamp

Pat sells house to Grossis

June:

Wiers Beach

BCA reading...Tom Rush MC

Dad's cancer slowing

decision to begin writing prose poems "Weasel" in Paragraph mag

6/16 Manny's through school: artifacts: footstool, clock

Brian is his friend

Driving lessons Rochester Gardens

CW gives Bash (in LA) \$ for a car

July:

Jimmy Cliff at Club Casino...Dylan at great Woods

7/5 journal: relationships with women

Manny bought a mountain bike plays with Nick

7/8 The Maine Outward Bound rejected Manny (so soon before he was
to go!) Frantic calls to Minnesota

Rochester Gardens Dope Incident

7/7: letter from Newmarket Court !!!

7/17 Read poems in Prescott Park

7/29 Started smoking

Almost finished EAR

Mom's blood tests not great Dad holding his own

Trip to VT Manny & Xavier

Louise: foot, lung, life problems

Jim has a hearing at the end of August

August:

Outward Bound (find letters)

PEI

September:

Bought Manny a truck

Louise sick constantly, crippled up. Jim's in jail.

AIS: Alton and Barrington

Soccer

9/25 Sleepy LaBeef here

November:

11/7 b'day and new floor (motel)

December:

12/3 Charlotte's wedding

12/23 Manny's driver's licence

12/24 Manny drives into a tree

Bob & Lisa engaged

MANNY'S NOTES TO US:

(date?)

and I need to stop ~~racking~~ things from other people. and I need a
lout of help MOM & DAD whut can I do to stop this prubthem I need
all the help I can get from you two to help me with this prubthem
whut I have right now OK

(date?)

Friday from Manny Weeks

1. Hi Mom & Dad I did a grat job in school today
- 2 I whunt bee home to night becusa Josh side that he whoues me to
sleep over there to night I am not haveing diner at home to night
OK Mom & Dad
3. I did the down stares and up stares too OK
4. I came home today and did the wood for to night
5. and I called on the miuken (machine) when I was at Jonell
Frankes houes to have a hot chioelet over there.
6. I love you Mom & Dad see to marrol OK By

Manny Weeks To night

1. No boudy called to night OK Mom & Dad
2. the frieres are fien to night I brout some wood in the hues OK
3. I need my lunch money \$1.50
4. I brout my Black Book down to night so you can sigen it thank
you Mom
5. I love you Mom and Dad
6. See you tomeroul in the after nouen OK Mom and Dad

To day Date 3/9/88

1. Manny had a graet night he had fun with Nicky & Bean & Lioun
(lena) we had a graet time to night.
did you Mom & Dad have fun too night I did it was graet it was fun
I love you Mom & Dad OK

3/18/88

Manny whent with Nicky to the Barrington Basball feeld I will soon

as pastibale OK Chart & Mom
and I did the dises and put the laundry outside on the lien OK
today 3/25/88
Dear Charter or Marie Harris
will you go to the bank to day. I mad a withdrawal passbook too
take the money out of the bank OK see when I get Home OK see you

4/3/88

Dear Charter and Mom
you mad my day go grat can you put my luch \$ money on the tabol
OK, and Mom superman was on T>V> on chiel 11 on T.V. I ase the end
of it it was so good
look on the back OK (arrow)
and Mom thank for help my on my homework over the weekend thank. I
had a grat weekend see you when I get home
I am going to bed rigeht now OK look at this.

4/11/88

look at this OK
Mom & Dad I had a grat day with my briether Joish we hand fun it
was so grat for pick him up. and to see him I love my briether a
lout to because he is my briether to OK. and thank you a lout
OK thank Mom & Dad

5/25/88

Dear Charter Weeks.
Manny is going to bed and Charter I need some money for driving
tomerol. and I sudey my wordes to night. and Mom came houm at 9:21
at night good night Mom and Dad

6/30/88

Mom & Dad I was thinking abot going (drawing) roil skating on
Friday If thats all right with you Mom & Dad becuas they are open
at 8:00 intell 12:00 on Friday tomerol and Manny wolud like to go
skateing at Happt Wheels on Friday

FROM MANNY'S SCHOOL NOTEBOOKS (with some of my handwritten
remarks, replies, etc.)

9/7/88

Hi Marie,

Here is Manny's assignment notebook. We will start with the
progress reports next Friday. I will send a memo to Manny's
teachers explaining the procedure for the notebook and will set up
the meeting as well. Manny has a copy of his schedule and I will
be working very closely with him in Resource.

Hope you enjoyed your summer--I am looking forward to working
with Manny this year. We'll be in touch.

Gail Terra

Gail

Thanks for getting us started on the right foot
Charter

3rd Period English

Manny is starting out well. For Tues: Read story p.15-18 (Blue reading book). Look up these words: partner, courting, vice, reform

J. Collins

Wood I

Good listening habits
Listens and applies the material
Pleasant to be around
Very teachable
Forsee no problems

Mr. Foote

(making a mirror shelf)

Reviewing adding & subtracting using carrying and borrowing. Has hmwk p. 5 Set even.

R. Morgan

Mostly wrong. Only did Set D. Was that all that was required? CW

9/16/88

Had quiz on vocab. This was hard for Manny to do alone. When I worked with him he did OK.

Started work on proper nouns. Please complete paper on proper nouns.

Manny's printing is easily the best in his group! His attention span was remarkable when working on the quiz. Fine tenacity.

This is new! MH

Manny really likes this class!

(How much of these daily pages should I transcribe? His high school years were virtually without incident. Perhaps I should look for telling interchanges, examples of progress or lack thereof).

Bruce MacAdam

Mr Voss

Pelletier

Foote

Morgan

Terra

10/26 Finishing mirror shelf

11/15 ..I think part of his problem was that he did not understand what velvet or vinyl was, could not describe swiss cheese, etc. Not understanding the concepts/properties of items in the examples made sililies very difficult...

11/16 Hi Gail-Thanks for your note. Tonight we felt velvet, vinyl and looked at Swiss cheese!--repairing yet another hole in the cultural fabric! (& we reviewed the whole notion of similes)...

M. not interested in "prom questionnaire."

11/22 Best "clean up" person I have had in years.

Foote

11/28: Manny passed his driver's test!

(Huge amounts of material for History. We just limped through the heavy book all semester.)

To: the teachers of Manny Weeks

Date: 2/1/88

From: Rhonda Morgan-Special Education

Ed Labbe-gym

Gail Terra-Math skills

Nat Wensley-04 English

Norma Wotton-04 Biology

Lynda Morgan-Child Development

Dave Robbins-04 Wood

Hi, Just a reminder for those of you who know Manny and an introduction for those who don't. Manny is a special student who needs to be monitored. Manny has difficulty taking notes, remembering homework assignments and asking for help. He is a very courteous and quiet student, which makes it easy for him to get 'lost in the shuffle.' Please notify me if there are any problems, questions or concerns regarding Manny. Manny has an assignment book which his parents and I monitor. Please write assignments in this book as you assign reading or writing assignments or projects. Thank you.

Lots of trouble with mult & div flash cards, etc.

3/23 Doing fine--doing digestive system, then nervous system--all caught up! 83 on last test--best in class

Norma

4/5 Manny really likes (and has memorized) Langston Hughes' poems.

(4/6 Manny sprained his knee... no jumping or sprinting for 3 weeks)

(4/13 Figurative language with Nat Wensley. Manny really likes this (eg. drop me a line)

4/13 We saw an excellent video on Facial Reconstruction of a Portsmouth boy... Manny said it was "hard to watch." I'll bet!

Norma

4/14 Manny was almost ready today--he knew the answers, I think, but he didn't have them written down. He has several clock-type problems to do today for homework.

Bruce MacAdam

Though we worked on these, I think they're very difficult for M. who has just recently learned to tell time. MH

4/19 Mrs Wotton: We spent a little over an hour reading and reviewing the chapter on human reproduction, 97-107. We talked about it and went over the terms. It is hard to tell what he doesn't remember and what he finds embarrassing to say out loud.

Thanks. Charter

5/9/88 GREAT DAY IN ENGLISH

Manny did an individualized reading about the San Francisco earthquake today. He scored 100% on the reading comprehension!!! Needless to say, he is VERY PROUD of having done this by himself. (This is approximately Grade 4 level reading according to the publisher; however, we have found their estimates to be very conservative.)

Nat

5/13 Manny scored 82% on the Langston Hughes test! Great job.
N. Wensley

N. Wensley

5/24 More change & calculator review. Good day.
B. MacAdam

B. MacAdam

Early June: exams

Chas. Bonno/Georgia (regrettably, rejected CATECHISM)

Journal:

January:

1/8 Diane & Jan leave for Italy; Marjorie goes to China in March & June

Bill's in love with Rochelle; Bash still with Susan

Dad's getting sicker Mom's blood readings are higher

Manny & Nancy are having their weekly meetings: money, etc. (when did this begin? how long did they meet?)

Rug from Bill for my study

Diane Davis' tale

1/21 Dad died

Manny to Fernie 2/17-2/27

March:

AIS Barrington (The Dead Poets)

Puerto Rico with CW... 3/7-3/17 (Sharon Hilton)

Ithaca House/Georgia (regretfully) rejected CATECHISM

Bash visits

May 20: Junior Prom

Easter at Bas & Mary's

June: Bob & Lisa's wedding

July: EAR published

July: Corvette VT trip

August: trip to Fernie (Kalispell: cemetery article)

Sept:

Sapphire

Oct:

Binghamton (Anitec)

Corvette:VT

Nov:

continuing to try to quit smoking

Trip to Seattle to meet Rochelle & girls

Thanksgiving here

December:

cyst removed 12/11

Christmas at Kate & Jeff's

12/28 Montreal..St Jerome

MANNY'S NOTES

1/3/89

I feed the cat today Mom

I well see you and Charter Weeks when I get back OK Mom.

Today Date 1-5-89

1. A Mom I all the loundey. and the dishes and the stouves, and all of my homework to night when I got home to day and I did about Bull Run to today. I did ever thing today for you

Today 3/3/89

I did the cat OK Mom do not feed the cat Mom OK I feed him today

See you soon Mom & Dad

March:

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.

March date 3/6/89

1 Dear Xavier: I had fun with you whch 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.

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 Xavier

See you Xavier. right back soon OK I whunt to hear eveathing about it.

(NB: Letter from Annie; letter to Rudman)

SCHOOL NOTES, ETC.

Today May 5/1/89

Thank you for the dinner. Chater you & Mom are graet people. I love you so much. I well see you to after school OK at 3:00
by have a graet time today OK (drawing of fluffy clouds and a fat, smiling sun)

Date 5/15/89

Hi! Mom & Dad: Thank you for being grat when my brouther J came. We had a grat time with him. I did the cat today I well see you today Mom & Dad.

6/14

Calles to night

1. Sub Baesen called to night for you Charter and Mom you need to call him to night at 9:00 OK

it is 10:00 I am going to bed OK (smile face drawing)

2. I study to night OK Mom & Dad it is 9:50 I am tieer tonight.

Date 6/20/89

1 Hi! Mom I am so happy that I am geting out on Wenesday the 21 the friest day of sumer (drawing of a sun)

2 I did the cat today OK Mom

I well see you
3 have a good day today OK Mom

calles to night Date 7/25/89

1 Loues called for you Mom & Dad
2 a man on the phouen called for you Charter. and he is going to call you to night
3 Charey came over to night to get her stouf. She whent home alleredy

to day is 7/26/89

1 Hi! Mom & Dad did you two have fun last night
2 I did the cat for you today
3 Thank you for the note for today
4 to day is going to bee houet out becusa of the sun. (drawing of fun with smile) sun

To night Date 8/2/89

1. Hi! Mom & Dad: I had fun with Whes. I had dinner two geter. with him.
2 I louest my truck kieas to day when I was at Joues house. I whent to driver theam to the river and I louest them theare. I do not know wheat to do about it I am mad that I louest my truck keeas. and I need to go to work tomerol
3 are you haveing fun to night I am not haveing fun to night.
4 I need a ried to work to maerol Dad or Mom
5 Someone called for you Charter. and she well call you tomeorl
6 I couck the launed down (laundry)
7 I am going to bed. I well see you tomeourl.

Today Date 8/3/89

1 A Mom I did the cat for you
2 and if I foned the truck keais I well make a neuther sealet for the truck. I well look for theam OK to day after worck
3 I love you two so much I well see you soon today
4 did you have fun to night

Saterday night (8/12/89)

1 Hi Mom: I am going out for a wouck. and I well bee home at 10:30 OK see you
I love you to Manny.
2 a Mom somebey called for you to night for you it was a griel she is going to call you at 8:00 OK
3 My and Weas are going some were OK Mom

(My note: Hi Manny--where were you?)

1 I whent over to weasy houes after soccer
2 My and Joues and Weasy when fishing and whent to Rouedcher to have a donet and coffee and when we had a tauk allobet thing
3 I call you today at 8:30 but you was not theray at all
4 I did not now where you whent to night I was so mad

Hi! Mom & Dad. I whent to go get the fish. Nicky won me to eat thear
 I meot go some were with Nicky to night OK
 I love you Mom and Dad
 see you. Me and
 Nicky are going bowling in Rochester I do not have any money so I
 took some money and I will pay you back tomorrow (It was on the
 table) (Nick obviously corrected M's spelling)

To night (9/25/89)

- 1 I am sarey that I was late
- 2 I now all of my whears
- 3 I hoop you had fun to day.
- 4 I take down all the laundry.
- 5 I now all the wheiares. I writ all the wheiares to night. and I
 now that I can do it.
- 6 I am going to bed Mom I will see you in the mouering
- 7 did you two have fun. I now that you to had fun to night.
- 8 I well do great to meourol at school.
- 9 I did evething to night
- I did it all to night OK
- Mom and Dad

Tonight Date 12/ /89

- 1 A Mom: I did my homework to night
- 2 I had dinner. and I did the wood for Charter today.
- 3 I am going to a hocky game to night
- 4 I am haveing triubol with my English
- 5 Piegy called for you Mom
- 6 I am comeing back at 8:00 Mom see you. OK Manny.

Selections for School Notebooks

1/4/89 Math

Last night's homework was perfect--very neat, properly set up and
 accurately done. Redo puzzle #16 tonight. Bruce
 Done alone! MH

1/5/89 Math

Homework perfect again! (Is he using a calculator? I don't think he
 is but I don't know). Chris & Manny are working together on a
 project in class, measuring floor area. They're starting to think
 efficiently--it's fun to see them doing so well. Manny works very
 well with someone else if he isn't opushed too hard by the other
 person--he seems to enjoy doing things that he understands. No
 homework tonight. Bruce

English

(I'm envious of Manny's creative artistic talents!) (Mr. Collins)

1/9/89 Woodshop

Great day today--much progress with the concept of "finishing
 project." Handled the power equipment safely and knowledgeably today

(January 23-25 exams
History & science too hard OK on math, Eng, wood)
New semester:
Foods, science, math, hist, rr

The notes roll along, mostly to do with what Manny's having trouble with, when he succeeds, what the assignments are, etc.
March: Sharon Hilton kept up the journal...no behavior problems or school problems.

March: Manny's doing a lot of reading on his own in school w Mr. Collins. He really likes Mr. C & vice versa

Gail Terra is a gem!

3/23 English Had UNH student intriduce the book A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE. Each boy discussed background--Manny made an important contribution by mentioning his grandparents farm in VT This was a perfect tie-in. We will continue with this book each Thursday.

(I'm skipping Hist (Mr Pelletier) & Science (Mr Voss)notes because they're all about assignments. They made gave me a headache then and they still do! Too hard!)
Foods: lots of cooking with Mrs Lucas

April: IEP (see sheet)

Very calm school year
5/15 ...He says he's going to order flowers for his prom date--I'm glad he's going! Gail

5/22...Manny's bearing at the prom was regal!...(Collins)

5/25: teachers react to prom pictures
"I expect to see Manny modeling for ESQUIRE!" (Collins)

(NB Good idea to xerox a page or two of any of these books as an example of how much contact we all had).

September:
Typing (MacAdam)
Math (Bill Miller)
American Gov't (Mrs Hyde)
English Mrs. Wisowaty
Print Shop (Robbins)
Resource

English Journal

These notes are invaluable...insights on self, family, friends, school, social life.

see 11/3/89 in assignment books what's the "big problem" ???
Maps in American gov't

February, 1990 Seattle for Manny
where were we?

List of all Manny's ^{Nicaragua} woodshop projects, culminating in the dry sink

Summer job: foods

Fall: job at Animal Medical

March: my trip to Wisconsin Manny's flip out (the story)

March-June: Josh/Dover/Jose

Manny's notes:

To night Charter (1/8/90)

Charter Weeks. I am going to bed

I feel sick I have a cold

Charter all the bud come puny to night and tell them that Manny is not going to school OK Charter

See you in the morning OK good night Charter Weeks.

Calles to night Date 3/14/90

1. Piaegy called for you Mom. And she well call you tomarol Mom.
2. Nobody called seeip for one prousen Piaegy she was the one how called last night.

3. I am going to bed soon.

4. I well see you tomoreol after school OK Mom & Dad. And have a nice sleep OK Mom & Dad.

Love you so much.

good night.

To night 5/3/90

1 Hi! Mom: I mad a pastel paineting to night.

2 I called Rich. He is comeing over tomouerl Mom.

3 I did all of my home work to night.

4 I hoop you had fun Mom.

5 do not forget to write in mi book Mom.

6. I need \$5 for the grieastion trip we are going to Fun tuen and the workes after gouiaation

Rich to(ld) mi I need \$5.00 to go on the trip Mom. I called him today Mom.

Todayes Note Date 5/4/90

Hi! Mom: I like your note.

I did the cat for you Mom.

Yes Rich is going to work with mi at Fred.

did you like mi pastel picher mom.

I well see you at 4:00 OK mom.

have a nice day mom. And Charter and I had a nice dinner last night mom.

Thank you for the money mom.

see you later on OK mom.

by mom

from Manny Weeks.

(no date)

Dear Charter: last night something whent rung with my truck. And I

had a flat. last night
 And my spare had a cut in it.
 And so Rob told me to get it fixes.
 So my truck is at Dover were the dances was halled last night.
 And so I have to sow you were the truck is. so you Dad can tell me
 wear I can get it fixes.
 The truck is at the (triangle) club in Dover.
 And I have to go get it today.
 Thes happend last night.

Note for to night (10/27/90)

- 1 Hi! Mom & Dad: I did the things you told me to do for today.
- 2 I am sary why I was late.
- 3 I put wood into the cook stove.
- 4 I put wood into the house.
- 5 I am sary Mom & Dad.
- 6 Mom your shiester came today Mom.
- 7 And somebouy called for you Mom.
 This friend was Die Ann. She called for you Mom.
 From Manny.

Todays note 11/7/90

- 1 Hi! Mom: I hope you had fun last night.
2. And I gave the cat some food today Mom.
- 3 And how old are you Mom.
- 4 Happy Birethday Mom. (And you are getting to old Mom.)
- 5 And I will see you later on today Mom.
 by Mom
 Manny (cake sketch) Happy Birthday Mom

Todays note 11/19/90

- 1 A Mom I did the cat for you.
- 2 And Mom I well tell Coreen. that I will be working for her on
 Thursday at 6:00-8:00.
- 3 And I have to bring some kiend of food for the Thauksgiveing party
 in Dover Lering School. The one I go to Mom.
- 4 And Mom I will buy a roll of tokens today OK Mom.
- 5 I will see you Mom or Dad.
 Manny

Todays note 11/20/90

- 1 Hi! Mom: I did the cat for you today.
- 2 I will light the fire in the community house.
- 3 And I know that you are going to buy lunch smnakes for Manny
 lunch.
- 4 Do not for get to buy cookes.
- 5 And I well buty egglog on my way home.
- 6 A Mom we need mouer catfood.
- 7 By Mom & Dad I well see you two. when I get back from work right
mom.
 Manny

School Notes

Last semester:

Economics

Wood Shop

English

Computers

Math

Resource

Manny's writing his own assignments, eg.

1/29/90 Woodshop

whouch a movey on Red Wood

gave woodshop 3 weedshop sheeiaes

give back sheeies to Mr. Robbins

1/31/90

(math) for homework do all 4 shies to night.

2/2/90

I work on my English Jounerl today. And I did not have home work today at all.

2/2/90

Math

We are working with money in class. and we work with cheang and paper money today.

2/5/90

Woodshop

Today we work on floaton, jointer and plane, to thickness.

4/20/90

I did all of my English in class. No homework. Have a good vaickeshen Mrss Wiz.

5/4/90

Typing

Today. I well typ mi story on the Blue Annigl. And today I work on English woreds. in typing class.

5/4/90

Resource Room

I did not have nene homework to do for math. So I was reading the newspaper today. In the Resource Room. I head that the Berouans won last night game.

5/16/90

Woodshop

Today. I put my lieges togeter and sand my woodshop prugjet today. In the wood shop room.

Most days the same. No crises.

Graduation: Wim & Jonell/Maria & Paul

Summer... then job at Animal Medical

1991

Job

My trip to Wisconsin

Manny's flip out and all that followed

Dover: Josh, until about June no job

Jose arrives

Job at Elliot Rose no job for Jose, then part time at Gold's

Manny's relationships: Jose, girls, friends

Ups and downs at Elliot Rose

1992

Jose's tribulations

Manny's deteriorating relationship with Jose

(see recent journal notes.)

When did Lenya visit us? ~~1992~~
1989

1991

April: Manny returns/appt and roommate hunting/ my BP/

Manny in 47B by the end of April with Josh

May: Seattle (Corvette)

July: Lenya in Toronto

August: Bash visits Lenya's wedding in Buffalo

late August: Elliott Rose

The people at Animal Medical Center had been very understanding, but when Manny

(Transition to Manny's coming home, then finding 47B with Josh.

Knowing Josh would be temporary, we began negotiating with Jos*p 197* to replace Josh)

The job hunts: Manny, Jos*p 197* and Josh (Josh off to Alaska)
Elliott Rose Tuttle's Gold's

Manny had been a bag lady all summer.

We'd finally pulled the plug. Manny blew off a potentially wonderful job at The School House Restaurant--some dish washing, some salad prep--and Charter and I decided to cut him loose with his decisions. No more money. No more track. The weather was moderating. Manny had friends in Dover. He wouldn't freeze or starve.

Or call.

Naturally we kept tabs on him. Josh reported his whereabouts ("But he won't visit me and Sara."), informing us that Manny was probably living with Penny's family. Now and then, as the pretext that we needed work, we'd pick him up (at lunch?) Dunno...never where he actually lived) and bring him to Harrington to stack wood or rototill the garden.

"Manny," I'd say as he sipped creamy coffee at our table, "are you eating OK?"

"Oh yes, Mom. You know, there's a church you can go to and they have tables and you can get all the food you want."

I made a note to send the Dover soup kitchen a donation for feeding our son.

"And there's a place that gives you clothes. What-a-
want."

"Do you still have your mountain bike?"

"Um. No. It's lost. I think it was stolen."

"Charter, what's happening with the Job Corps?"

"The last time I called they said he was still in the States. It might be any day now."

But the weeks dragged on and no word. Then one afternoon a new Job Corps person called. She was, she said, reviewing the

Date
10/10/93

Sunday's note

Dear Mom and Dad: I am haveing a somewhut time here at the old Dorm It is getting vear bad at this places And I miss Dover N,H so much. (.And Mom and Dad I got my Class "A" Pass at the old dorm.) And also I got two pices of paper from the job corps Center (.And I am vear happy about it about the job I have ben doing in the job Corps Center.) And I got three thinges I did gerat on in the job corps Center.) (.And I am doing all the things in the old Dorm Mom and Dad (.And I heard a lout of bad thinges in this place Mom and Dad.) (.And thay are druges, and people geting into fiteing with people.) And thas how I do not like this places Mom and Dad.) I rather get a job in now N,H, like Dover N, H, whear my Bruother Jose is right now Mom.) (.And Mom I am going to send you this thing of paperes in the mayold OK Mom and Dad
Hi! I miss you two so much
And I miss my bruother Jose alout
And tell him that I mis the Baby alout

Manny had been a bag lady all summer.

We'd finally pulled the plug. Manny blew off a perfectly wonderful job at The School House Restaurant--some dish washing, some salad prep--and Charter and I decided to cut him loose with his decisions. No more money. No more truck. The weather was moderating. Manny had friends in Dover. He wouldn't freeze or starve.

Or call.

Naturally we kept tabs on him. José reported his whereabouts ("But he won't visit me and Sara."), informing us that Manny was probably living with Penny's family. Now and then, on the pretext that we needed work, we'd pick him up (at Dunkin' Donuts...never where he actually lived) and bring him to Barrington to stack wood or rototill the garden.

"Manny," I'd say as he sipped creamy coffee at our table, "are you eating OK?"

"Oh yes, Mom. You know, there's a church you can go to and they have tables and you can get all the food you want."

I made a note to send the Dover soup kitchen a donation for feeding our son.

"And there's a place that gives you clothes. Whatever you want."

"Do you still have your mountain bike?"

"Um. No. It's lost. I think it was stolen."

"Charter, what's happening with the Job Corps?"

"The last time I called they said he was still on the list. It ought to be any day now."

But the weeks dragged on and no word. Then one afternoon a new Job Corps person called. She was, she said, reviewing the

applications.

"God, it's been more than a year!" I was losing patience.

Charter was worried. "I explained about Manny's disabilities. I was just trying to help her place him. Now all of a sudden she's talking about how the Job Corps can't admit people with disabilities. How she needs school IEPs. Psychological reports..."

"We've been through all that!"

"Yeah. Well, we're about to go through it again."

"Charter, who do we know? What can we do?"

"No one. Nothing."

It has always been my conviction that everyone knows someone who can assist them in solving any given problem.

That night I went to sleep slowly, paging through my random access memory. In the morning I had the answer.

"Sargent Shriver!"

"What?"

My Dad died several years ago. He was a man people remembered. Because he was a doctor who tended to everyone. Because he was a man who listened. Because...I don't know... he *touched* people. In any case...

The New York Times ran an obituary that I wrote (their obit person having decided that Basil Harris was worthy of a few lines, sans photo) and Sargent Shriver must have read it. Which was why he called my brother Dave (picked at random from the list of survivors) to find out Mom's number so he could tell her how sad he was that his old friend Marie Harris' husband had died.

"Sargent Shriver! He founded the Job Corps!"

"So?"

"So I'm sure he'll be interested in Manny."

"Give me a break."

Manny had been interviewed. Manny had been deemed Job Corps material. It was simply a matter of time and space. But now we had a new bureaucrat with her new agenda.

"I'm going to write to Sargent Shriver."

I called Mom for an address and shipped off my package. A one page letter and a Manny watercolor.

His secretary called me days after Manny was accepted. Was everything OK? Could Mr. Shriver's office be of further help? And, she added, Mr. Shriver had been at the National Gallery and he couldn't resist comparing Manny's work to Van Gogh.

"Van Gogh," I said, "is Manny's favorite painter, after Monet."

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.

At first, with his brother as a roommate, Manny had kept a tidy house. Every morning, Jos[†] 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."

"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 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?"

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, "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 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.

Yesterday, as I finished putting up the first crop of green beans and was scraping bean ends from a colander into the plastic compost bucket, I remembered Manny saying, in the deliberate way he has when he's been thinking about something for a long time (in this case, three and a half years), "Mom, why do we dump the compost into the barrel?"

Manny hasn't been in touch with us for almost a month. I hear from his brother, who hears from Donald who spoke to Skip, that Manny's eating at the Dover Friendly Kitchen two evenings a week and that he's getting pants from some organization that clothes the naked.

"He looks dumb," was how José put it. "I drove over to Ham Street on Thursday. Manny was sitting on a porch with this old guy. He pretended he didn't see me. He had his hand over his face...you know how he does when he doesn't want you to see him...but I stopped anyway. I couldn't believe how he looked. His jeans didn't even come down to his socks!"

José was drinking a beer on our porch in his pressed white jeans, new baby on his lap, and Sara looking at him like a wife.

"I took him home and asked him to spend the night, but he left when Sara was upstairs putting Emily to bed."

We're talking about his brother, the boy who used to dress carefully, matching purple and black checked flannel shirt to black jeans, mauve socks. The boy who knew he didn't look good in any shade of brown, who routinely remarked on other people's style.

"You look great tonight, Manny," Charter'd say, as Manny was leaving the house for a night of roller skating.

"Thanks, Chart. I always look great." Gentle. Assured. Happy.

Manny had his own aesthetic about chores too. He stacked cordwood perfectly. "For God's sake, don't pay him by the hour!" Charter used to warn our philanthropic neighbors. He raked oak leaves into beautiful symmetrical piles for burning and laid manure on the garden in tablespoons no matter how clear we were about just forking the stuff randomly across the rows.

In painting after painting, he detailed daylilies or the bunches of basil and parsley and black eyed susans I stuffed into glass milkbottles on the diningroom table.

Manny noticed everything, even the pink moth beating its wings against the little panes of the kitchen window. So when he asked me about the compost dumping--that daily routine we'd practiced long before he arrived in our house and one which, like so many other tasks, we all performed by rote--I was only surprised it had taken so long.

"All the stuff we don't eat can go into the barrel. It sits there and kind of cooks. When we have enough, we put it back on the garden and it helps the soil feed new plants."

"That's a great idea!" Manny said.

These late summer days Manny's not stacking our wood for the winter or dumping wilted vegetables from the kitchen bowl into the 50 gallon drum that Charter made into a compost barrel by blasting air holes in it with his old rifle.

I wonder what questions propose themselves to him these days.

Date 9/30/93

I will call you later on 10/1
for a Dad. And I love you Mom.
Of your son Manny Weeks.

I know how to be a mother. I've done it. Twice and more. It
involved a great deal of patience, understanding, running out
of ideas and being very, very patient. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.

But because of my mother, I can say to her a mother
like the other side. I can say.

She's a mother. She's a mother.
I have to ask myself. Can I take a mother?
For mother should be a mother.
And she: they are like what I see your mother do? he
she says with a smile, as though he were a mother.
She says.

She's a mother. She's a mother.
This one is a mother. This one is a mother.
A mother. A mother. A mother.
And she says: I'm a mother.
She says.

I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.

No.

But I will never know what Manny thinks

Yes.

But I will never know what Manny thinks
and so will never be
the mother he deserved.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.
I know how to be a mother. I know how to be a mother.

positive

running in circles in place

Separateness
* aside:

What's missing that may come from other places.

Date 9/30/93

I will call you later on OK Mom & Dad.) And I love you MOM
OK from your sun Manny Weeks.

I know how to be a mother. I've done it. Twice and more. ~~It involves running to the store, running interference, running out of ideas on a rainy day, running short of time, running little errands, running late, running out of patience. Running around.~~ It was always easy, really. That part.

See? Because of me, Manny can say he has a mother like the other kids. He can say

She's Marie. My mother.

I have to ask my mother.

My mother is out tonight. Can I take a message?

Your mother should call my mother.

And when they ask him things like what does your mother do? he can say, with some pride, ~~as though he were complicitous--~~

She types.

But mothering.

This ^{is} has always been another, more delicate matter.

A seesaw: its two ends
need and approval;
its fulcrum, power.

I know how Manny thinks.

~~Manny's thinking is a thesaurus.~~

think, v.

assume; comprehend; consider; deliberate; estimate; envision;
fathom; project; realize; reason; state; study; understand;
weigh

No.

gather; imagine; muse; ponder; visualize

Yes.

But I will never know what Manny thinks

and so will never be

the mother he deserved.

~~mother that I am now~~

~~fulcrum~~

~~of those other seesaws.~~

Metaphor / image instead "show"

anecdote

naive naming

locked into that beginning perception of language & understanding

no one could.

empathy

35

(like other kids)

what's missing

(feeling) your poem.

eg. I Stand Here Ironing

*

Date 9/30/93

I will call you later on OK
Mom & Dad.) And I love you MOM
OK from your sun Manny Weeks.

I know how to be a mother. I've done it. Twice and more.
Because of me, Manny can say he has a mother
like the other kids. He can say

That's Marie. My mother.

I have to ask my mother.

My mother is out tonight. Can I take a message?

Your mother should call my mother.

And when they ask him what does your mother do? he can say, with
some pride, *She types.*

I've learned how Manny thinks.

(anecdote)

(or: it begins with a concrete experience or a memory, a
pleasing memory he is anxious to reproduce; Manny has an amazing
memory for what can be safely repeated: song lyrics, trips he
has taken, places he's been, and, once having got there, the
precise way to return. --the skating story?-- the names and
calls of birds and animals; repetition; repetition is what
etches anything on his brain; hence the notes, the pleasure in
chores, the comfort of the school notebook assignments; check it
off, task by task

(transition, eg. I am his mother --running, etc.)

But mothering.

This is another, more delicate matter,
a seesaw: its two ends
need and approval;
its fulcrum, power.

think, v.

*assume; comprehend; consider; deliberate; estimate; envision;
fathom; project; realize; reason; state; study; understand;
weigh*

No.

gather; imagine; muse; ponder; visualize

Yes.

But I do not know, will never know
what Manny thinks
and so will never be

the mother he deserves.

No one could.

Pyschologists say the illness, called reactive attachment disorder, in which a child cannot bond with a caregiver--has been diagnosed most often in children from American foster care and foreign orpahanges who have had an extended period of emotional deprivation in their early years.

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

I grow up in Massachusetts. When i was litel boy in Mass. becus me and mi foster pariens got me so mad and they hit me. becus i was get in to troubl weth my brother becus we get in to troubl a lot at home and my Dad and Mom put me in restricshun most of the day.

I live in severl diffent houses. won of the houses i live in was a partment billding. and sevrl smaler houses and a foster kare home.

3. Why I live in New Hampshire Now? becaus i got on T.V. with Jack wellams and we whent sailing in Boston and thas how i got put on T.V. weth Jack Wellams and i ask for a Mom and Dad becus they ran away from me. and i like the aniemals in the forest a lot. and i like to fish in the river a lot.

Fecundo hitches a ride with a trucker out of Chicopee before daybreak. He leaves his good suit in the back of the closet. At first Iris doesn't worry because he always comes back to her. But now he's been gone too long. Iris has to think. It's so difficult to think with the babies crying and everything. And that social worker. Maybe if she gives these two babies to that social worker for a while. Yes. Then she'll be able to think better. See when she gave away the little girl that time, Fecundo came home again. Yes.