

Kathleen Winter

Lost Shoe

In retrospect, I don't think you had much to do with the blood. It seemed to come after everything was over, after you broke me off at school's end on the sober advice of your father, that work-shirted millionaire who wouldn't divorce your mom or live with her. I was sure either God or my own iron will would bring you around.

And it happened, at one of the last backyard parties, ninety degrees at midnight, the keg tapped out, a bunch of us flinging our skins around a trampoline and my shoe flying off, you bringing it to me. In return I said I'd sleep with you after all.

Then it was simple to drive to the farm, to be back in your 70's Chevy, square-ish, like your Canadian Ranger jaw, back in the Hendrix/Zeppelin sound machine where we couldn't talk. I gave you a lot of credit, silently, for liking *A Raisin In the Sun*.

At the dairy creek we watched for moccasins sunning on limestone. We snagged our shirts on May-scorched cedar, picked around it under the oaks, the same fine dirt over your high-tops, over my gray sneakers. Our blanket felt ridiculously thin when we found the place.

That afternoon it seemed like a raw deal. I was sorry for my will and for you, taken in by the bargain. I had some paper napkins that saved me later from having to use leaves like we'd sometimes do in the country. You were a few feet away, finding snakes in the water. I was in the cedar burying my blood.