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A Child of Mind

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A Child of Mind

Nights when the conjuring of college thoughts seem as hopeless as trying to push a raw egg through a steel wall, the child appears to me. While I sit white-knuckled to my pen, the tiny peep of wet Keds begins to tap at my ears. Turning, I find his cherished toy cowboy hat passing in front of my doorknob. His little face comes near, one dominated by brown eyes, which glow, for they have never focused on Poli. Sci. or History of War. He has come to save me, to draw me off as if I were fresh cream on souring milk. Reaching out, he grips my pen-locked hand in his; an embrace so delicate, yet demanding carried out by Hershey bar-stained fingers. He rushes me from the room in an urgency known only to five-year-olds, for they still believe the world is huge and by hurrying, one can see all of it. Little words scamper from his mouth in a youthful whirlwind about salamanders and fossils and cartoons which have made him giggle. He shows me the right way to skip and turn somersaults. Thrashing hands describe where China is and how people make babies. Together, we shout all the bad words we can think of; then fall down in laughter, both secretly terrified someone might have heard. Just to make Mom mad, we swim out to the sandbar in our clothes to look for starfish and treasure. I am IT and he dashes off through the tall sagebrush. I find him by the canyon wall, staring at an ancient man painted on the stone. There is only an empty square for a face, but his trapezoid body is covered by streaks. They look like tears and I know I have stayed with the child too long. I pick up my pen and I shackle myself once more. To the textbooks and exams the child will never know.

Charles Riedinger