

Winter 1978

My Grandmother, Spit on by Nuns at Easter, Came to America

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Recommended Citation

Jacobson, Joanne. "My Grandmother, Spit on by Nuns at Easter, Came to America." *Iowa Journal of Literary Studies* 2 (1978): 36-36.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0743-2747.1016>

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*My Grandmother, Spit on by Nuns at Easter, Came to
America*

Here my grandfather manufactured screens.
Mornings, he drove off
to days of tacking squares
of mesh to wooden frames.
Who burst through those wire windows
was not his business. Every
evening he demanded pleasure,
calling for the music
of his young son's violin.

Weekly my mother dressed
in a tiny skirt and reached upon her toes
to become their ballerina.
Left to herself in afternoons,
she lay in wait for passing strangers,
flounced down from the cemented
porch, skirt awhirl, and kicked them
without pause until she sobbed.

To me they've left
their piano, the keyboard
grey, untouched for years.
No moon tonight,
just my banging in darkness,
still lonely, strange to them,
my toneless minuets still
the dance-tunes of Russians rising
from their heels in surprised black nights
across our lawn.

—Joanne Jacobson