Lettuce Leaves and Letters

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Abstract

Sleepy girls crash head-on In the dark morning. Toothpaste and wet wash-rags - It’s too early to laugh...
college, ain’t he, just like your boys, and he’s getting good grades. He ain’t done nothin’ wrong, either, I know. Not my boy. He’s a good one, my Peter.”

“No, Mary, he’s done nothing wrong. Peter has always been a wonderful boy. But…”

Suddenly Mary turned stark white and the hardness of her face vanished. Mrs. Monroe was vaguely reminded of the Mary she knew years ago and watched aghast as big tears… probably the first in many years…splashed down the dry hollowed cheeks. Mary knew.

“I was too late, Aggie,” she sobbed in a pitiful girlish pitch. “I was too late. I couldn’t save him. It got him, too, just like it got Ben and his father. Oh, Peter!…Peter!…My darling Peter!” And iron-hearted Mary became convulsed in sobs.

Mrs. Monroe stood unbelieving at what she saw. Then she impulsively put an arm around the broken sobbing figure. “He’s in the state sanitarium at Clarinda. Perhaps they can help him,” she said, but without reassurance. For what was it the doctor had said? Hereditary dementia…a father to son trait…no known cure.

— Louise Castle, Sci. So.

Lettuce Leaves and Letters

Sleepy girls crash head-on
In the dark morning.
Toothpaste and wet wash-rags —
It’s too early to laugh.

Three girls walking through a door.
One missing.
Hanging on the door,
“My coat’s caught.”
Letter from Mom —
"Dad was chasing the parakeet.
It's been three weeks, he should be getting acquainted."
The parakeet or Dad?

A dog sleeping in a classroom
Snored. The professor sighs.
A duet. We smile.

A boy looks at a title —
— Koncert fur Flote und Harfe —
"Some guy named Harvey gonna give a flute concert?"

"Kids, I've dreamed of directing a band like this . . ."
In my . . . no, that's not right.
Consulted — "I don't use 'em."

The buzzer rings.
I trip over contortionist roommates
Exercising weight away.

Meet an old friend.
"How are you?" "Fine."
Always fine, but never laugh.

Open the door —
Two limp forms stretched out
Exercising sleep away.

. . . Washing dishes from a sick tray.
Three lettuce leaves flop
Limply over my hand as I march
To the incinerator, laughing.

They wonder why I laugh
At lettuce leaves and letters.

— S. Chris Sommer, Sci. So.