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d o n . m a g i n
v i c k i . w e i s f e l d

**jami
fairleigh**

oil and dust

I wished I'd been born two hundred years ago.

Before technology died.

Before the world died.

What would it have been like to ride in an autocraft, to float in a mechanical bubble out of the sun and rain and insects? Even when I closed my eyes, I couldn't imagine traveling so fast you could cross a landscape in hours and days instead of months and years.

If I'd been born two hundred years ago, if I'd been born into the world of technology, I'd know who and where my parents were. More importantly, they'd know me. It was what I couldn't wrap my mind around — the family-shaped gaps in my mind and heart. With luck, I'd find my answers, but it didn't feel like they were coming soon.

The gray sky darkened my mood, and glancing up, I urged my horses into a faster walk. If I didn't reach the lake soon, I'd have no chance of booking passage on a ship before the onset of rough weather.

It had taken ten arduous days to pick our way through the wilderness of the White Mountains, and I was eager to talk with the traders who sailed the lake. Reliable news was always scarce, but as the year slipped into fall, the flow of information stopped while

mekhitar garabedian



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**bettina
hindes**

original sin

He had requested blood oranges from Sicily, but there were none to be found in the store that time of year. It was autumn so the sister brought an expensive, sizeable navel orange at the organic grocery store. It was from Spain. He didn't complain for once. She brought his clothes from the Seminary and helped him out of his hospital gown into his own underwear, his familiar white t-shirts and blue pants. The priestly vestments would have to wait. As he pulled on his boxers, neither was shocked to see how small his once-overwhelming manhood had become. Chemotherapy is a brutal process. A last resort even, and in this case, a half-hearted effort. He hadn't wanted to carry on the charade much longer; the sacramental mysteries of life no longer a priority. The evidence was right here: this member that had once driven him to actions he so regretted that he denied them entirely, now barely registered. The blood that had recently spilled was his own, still crusted beneath his fingernails. The sister pretended she hadn't seen the evidence and tsk'ed him into his coat, then called for the orderly. God was great, and she trusted in Him.

A few floors away in another wing, a nurse gives a baby a whack, and its cries ring out. There would have

**don
magin**

purple people eater

(This is not a true memoir. Some of it is as I remember, some of it is as I would like to remember, and some of it might just be the way it actually happened. Altogether, it is my life growing up in the 1950s and 60s)

I stood on the top step of the stoop with only one thought in my mind. “Should I buckle that little belt on the back of my Chinos?”

Deciding not to, I skipped down the eight steps, the words of “Purple People Eater” ringing in my brain. After all, I don’t have a girlfriend, and that unbuckled belt part will tell all the girls, “I’m available.”

Being “available” was important to a twelve-year-old boy in 1958. Basically it meant that he no longer thought girls were subhuman. Instead, they just might be worthy of playing a part in his life.

“So,” I thought, “today is the first day of summer vacation and I’m not going to waste it!” June 21st seemed to be a long time coming this year. But now, grammar school is history and high school is yet to be experienced. “The only questions are what should I do, and whom should I do it with?” The first question was pretty open-ended, but the second was limited to two names, Kenny or Dougie. From the last porch

**vicki
weisfeld**

the a in spaghetti

My mother loved to tell stories about the antics of the second-graders in her Princeton, New Jersey, classroom many years ago. Most were hilarious, but I think the story of Gabriella Buratti meant the most to her. I asked her to record it in a letter for me, and this is what she wrote.

A few weeks into the 1940 school year, my principal brought me a new student, Gabriella Buratti. Gabriella and her family had just arrived from Italy, and she spoke barely a word of English. Whether by nature a quiet child or just overwhelmed by the babbling of thirty other seven-year-olds, I couldn't say. I was a newly minted teacher and hadn't yet developed ways to multitask while keeping a lid on things, so I'm afraid I followed the squeaking wheel principle. My attention was mostly elsewhere.

Participation showed engagement, I firmly believed. Our classroom might be noisy, but at least the kids were eager. Teachers today call that "active learning." Back in the day, I called it "making sure the squirts were paying attention."

Gabriella liked to read. The books she brought to school were written in Italian, and the words certainly looked as difficult as those in our readers. She was

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