

So many summers ago that I doubt you are alive to recognize yourself, the old Galahad of my poem – but let's start with the baby, pushing her own stroller with fat starfish hands, while you, sullen neighbor of drawn drapes and noise complaints, carried a bag of trash as tidy and neatly knotted as yourself, frowning as if even a sour nod might cost you, as if the sun weren't beating glitter from the sidewalk, scattering diamonds in our path. How odd, to find myself the villain, and never know until this moment. I'll admit I was a barefoot slattern of a mother; I'll admit I should have kept that fat hand tucked tight in my own. She knocked the stroller down our steep drive and you leapt, slipped, and rose in bloody triumph, stroller clutched in a gnarled fist, to find the child safe against my knee. How odd, to realize now that old men are just men, as foolish with chivalry as any callow nineteen. Now that I have known loss, I know what you wished to spare us. Now that my bones ache, I know what that leap cost you, and the reckoning: my daughter's bright sharp laugh, my pretty hand extended as you sprawled, cursing, casting shadows in the drive.

- Anna Scotti