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## Stories: Early Memories

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# Stories: Early Memories

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*Bob De Smith*

## **I. Terrors**

Young Bobby and Bruce were terrors;  
The weather was foul—windy and wet,  
I imagine—  
And stuffy upstairs in our flat.

She was busy, bless her,  
In ways we knew nothing about:  
I hear the sewing machine,  
Whirring furiously,  
Or the clink of dishes in the sink,  
Or the sizzle of an iron on a shirt,  
The green sprinkling bottle nearby.

We? We bickered  
And teased and tousled  
And interrupted, calling for an arbiter.  
We were noisy, whiny, maybe even profane.

Finally, this:  
“You boys! You know what I should do?  
I should just leave you—  
Head out and, well, just leave!”

This is paraphrase—  
I don’t remember what she said  
Beyond the intent.

And we had it coming, for sure.  
It shut us up.

Later, as we moped in front of  
Second story bay windows,  
We saw on the street below  
The flash of a coat  
And kerchief,  
Red, must have been,  
Moving at pace away from us.

It wasn't her, of course,  
But we were bleating lambs,  
Scrambling for her skirts,  
Too scared to explain.

How she melted  
When she understood our fear,  
Regretting harsh words, of course,  
Never meaning them.

A lesson, really, in grace.  
"I will never leave you or forsake you."

## **II. More Mischief**

When we ran home,  
Out of breath,  
Because while messing around  
In a neighbor's front yard  
Waiting for friends to return,  
We had swung a croquet mallet  
Vigorously, imagining golf,  
And its head flew off,  
Smashing through front window  
Single pane glass,  
Now jagged evidence of our stupidity and damage,  
We bounded up the stairs,

And lied.

"Some big boys are after us," we wheezed.  
Pretty pale lying, don't you think?  
We looked the part, we figured,  
Of frightened, innocent children—  
Victims.

Mom took us each by one thin bicep,  
Thumbs firmly in flesh,  
Marching us out  
To face those phantom hooligans.

She didn't have far to look—  
Confession finally followed.  
But what I remember was not  
The punishment  
(Confession, restitution, restriction)  
But her fierce love  
As she scoured backyards.

I wish we had been right.  
I would like to have seen her  
Step to those intent on harm.

### **III. Cooler by the Lake**

A motorcycle—  
An old Triumph or Indian,  
I don't recall—  
With a real,  
Honest-to-goodness  
Sidecar,  
And a ride over the slight rise and down to the lake,  
The summer air cooling by the minute,  
The motor beating steady,  
The sun setting behind us.  
We two were stowed in the sidecar,  
Daring bugs in our teeth with wide grins.

But can you see her,  
Astride the bike  
Behind our dad,

Holding tight,  
Kerchief horizontal,  
Nothing but joy?

*November, 2022, as we wait for Mom to die*