

from windows. The space was too narrow for anyone larger than a skinny child to enter safely, so it was never cleaned. My mother would check the time on the clock over her sink, the one with a prayer for patience and grace written in Spanish. A birthday gift. She would see that it was time to wake me. She'd sigh deeply and say the same thing the view from her kitchen window always inspired her to say: *Ay, si yo pudiera volar.*

SHARON BRYAN

Around the Corner

When I was small, maybe seven or eight, I noticed some crinkled leather boots in my mother's closet, some I knew I had never seen her wear. She told me they were for horseback riding, and showed me some funny-shaped pants. "They're called jodhpurs," she said, and spelled it for me. She said she'd ridden when she was in college. She had taken archery, too. She had planned to major in journalism so she could meet with world leaders, and she had interviewed the university president for the student newspaper. She had taken Spanish, and sometimes spoke phrases of it around the house: "You're *loco in la cabeza*," she would say to my father, and she had taught me to count from *uno* to *diez*. She also knew another language: shorthand. Her mother had made her take it because it was practical, and my mother had used it when she worked as a secretary at the truckline. She wrote her Christmas lists in shorthand—and anything else she didn't want me or my father to read, like her diary. It was a little red leather book with gilt-edged pages, and I was most intrigued by its little gold lock. As I remember it, my mother showed it to me, and maybe even read some passages to me. Looking over her shoulder I could

see that some parts were in shorthand. When I asked what they said she just laughed and turned the page.

My mother seemed to treat the diary—and the boots and jodhpurs, the glamorous pictures of herself that she had sent to my father overseas, her dreams of becoming a famous journalist—as relics of a distant past that no longer had much to do with her. She had left them all behind for life with my father, and me, and eventually my two brothers. I loved my mother, and thought she was beautiful. I was grateful for the sort of mother she was—she had milk and cookies waiting when I came home from school, packed my lunchbox each morning. Every holiday was full of treats and surprises: a present by my plate on Valentine's Day, eggs hidden all over the house on Easter morning, Kool-Aid in my thermos on my birthday. Yet at the same time that I basked in the attention my mother lavished on me, I was haunted by the image of the person who seemed to have disappeared around the corner just before I arrived.

MAXINE KUMIN

Enough Jam for a Lifetime

January 25. Three days of this hard freeze; 10 below at dawn and a sullen 2 above by midday. After the morning barn chores, I start hauling quart containers of wild blackberries up from the basement freezer. I am a little reluctant to begin.

Last August, when the berries were at their most succulent, I did manage to cook up a sizable batch into jam. But everything peaks at once in a New England garden, and I turned to the importunate broccolis and cauliflowers and the second crop of bush beans, all of which wanted blanching and freezing straight-away. Also, late summer rains had roused the cucumber vines to new efforts. There was a sudden spurt of yellow squash as well.

Victor went on picking blackberries. Most mornings he scouted the slash pile along upturned boulders, residue from when we cleared the last four acres of forage pasture. We've never had to fence this final field, for the brush forms an impenetrable thicket on two sides and deep woods encircle the rest.

We've always had blackberries growing wild here and there on the property, good-sized ones, too. But never such largess, such abundance. I wondered what this bumper crop signified, after a