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Birthday Dinner with Dad in Detroit

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BIRTHDAY DINNER WITH DAD IN DETROIT

A misplaced Cinderella, I sit
Perched on the seat of Dad's old Dodge.
Booth for two awaits us at Joe Muer's,
Father shoots rapid-fire obscenities at
his battered car,
then apologizes.

Joe's double-doors swing wide,
we are engulfed in smiles.
"Reservations, booth for two."
"Name, please? Right this way."
Our host seats us with a pasted-on smile.
"Hope you enjoy your dinner."

One Martini, sans-charles Dickens,
One ginger-ale,
two,
three of each.
Briefcase folds away.

Hors d'oeuvres are served,
I smile while Father dumps
cottage cheese in his lap,
slurps minestrone,
mangles his napkin.

Dinner. Hmm . . .
My menu camouflages
half the table.
Here in Detroit, Joe's means seafood
so it's lobster for me,
Frog legs for Dad.

Mumbling and munching,
He repeats two-lines about his dinner
while feeding me a leg.
such crass trivia
shouldn't be mentioned
at the table, and I
remove the femur
from my front teeth
as he proposes a toast
to me.

My gingerale bubbles dry
around the lump in my throat,
recalling a song he wrote for me.
I risk a glance over the plates.
Pride and memories swell
behind Dad's glasses.
Father-Daughter talks till 4:00 AM
Thunderstorms,
Cranbrook Institute of Science and Art,
working late at the office,
A baseball mitt with a delicate necklace,
Grandma's funeral
Last year's Birthday dinner.

Our waiter returns.
Desert? of course!
Real Creme de menthe parfait,
Bubbly, green, boozey
Coffee with cow and sweets.
Dad says "You'll always know
what you want."

A beaming, balding waiter
returns a receipt
and Dad, like always,
leaves a generous tip.