

liked the look of this Friday as
 thrown back his curtains and
 looking on the lombardy-poplars.
 he would be chilly in his wind-
 he would be sweating before ar-
 that, shivering and sweating his
 like the weather.

alt muffets were the one good
 the day. Now he'd been told he'd
 sugar on them.

atics class, Eric thought of the
 McDoormat's lips still rolled
 if she were afraid of having left
 path. Eric thought of her break-
 milk or burnt egg or soggy cereal,
 ate, at a restaurant or with her
 an apartment, wherever she ate.
 He she ate very much.

apped his 2HB's. Marks flowed
 forming instantly. He now watched
 did not remind him of anything,
 pen or ants, they were themselves.
 He now on them and rubbed back and
 about another note.

oke answered Miss McDoormat,
 back her hair and brushed over
 her fingers. Eric liked seeing her
 don't know why. It was one of the
 sent a wave of goosebumps over
 the scalp. Among the other things:
 he look over his shoulder at a
 and just victoriously finished--being
 row of a chest-expanding brass-
 night-lunching, orange-juice swim-
 his teeth, propped up in bed with
 view out the window, forgetting
 the book on the blanket.

aws bumped down on the desk.
 She Holyoke's daughter. She was the
 only class Eric had known before
 Palmer, the history-whizz of his
 grade.

Eric's father lifting a scalpel over
 his patient. Eric saw Lardia Tucker tak-
 ing payments for the chart in her Home-
 Ec how the rectangular light over Miss
 McDoormat and put her out of her misery.

had paraded the breakfast-tray up
 to had chafed Eric. Another thing
 had him more--he had been fathoms
 asleep the discovery of the illness, his
 mother shook him awake to help, he,
 the had now in grade-seven.

stooped to the floor! It was the
 first had dropped the book, the book
 that failed to her hand. A note broke
 into air. He wavered. Wrestle off the
 bore.

had it out, his right arm fencing
 the Miss McDoormat. She moved
 farther the board as the lines approached
 the pushed the note into Tammy
 Thomas. "Get it to Billy," he mouthed.

Billy had just read it and caught
 hold those as if to block a nose-bleed
 when McDoormat did a perfect pivot on her
 right she rushed back to Billy, Eric
 thought her shoes having heels, it was the
 first heels had rung out that way.

She the single fold and held the
 note right hand, the hand for chalk, her
 other down into the book again. Her eyes
 read the eyes.

Pin her cheeks, she scuffled to her
 desk the note under a Bank of
 Nova calendar. She said "Eric Eagles I'll
 see you at Corey's office at quarter-to-
 twelve note notes on the board until the
 bell. The screamed four times, the first
 times in her hand.

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The stinging-machine ink was purple, the
 form more than a recipe-card. BERTRAND
 STREET SCHOOL NOTICE OF MISBE-
 HAVIOR DATE Oct. 21 TEACHER Miss
 McDoormat COMPLAINT Note-passing and in-
 sulting DISCIPLINE -----COMMENTS
 See attached note. We are not punishing Eric
 this do suggest that you, as parents,
 speak to your son. He cannot continue such
 flagrant behavior. Below was a parent's signa-
 ture underneath, stapled to the form, was
 a crinkled reading Miss D. s got on falsies

Eric usually walked home at noon with Bob
 Wilbur, who like him played intramural volley-
 ball, or Jim Palmer, the only person he ever
 talked to about current-events. On his way home
 today the streets were almost deserted. A cat
 dove into a mound of leaves, two grackles dive-
 bombed at a crow, the sun blinked drowsily
 and doors slammed, the wind tough. Mr Corey
 hadn't kept him any longer than it had taken
 to fill out the form and say 'I hope you're
 proud of yourself, young man.' The time lost
 had been in waiting. Outside the office Eric
 had plunged his hands in his back-pockets and
 stood with Miss McDoormat, her arms folded
 on her chest.

The note was in his shirt, his only self-chosen
 shirt, the one with subdued browns and blues
 mixed as if two paint-cans had spilled together.
 His red windbreaker was zipped to his neck, the
 wind ballooning it out. He hooked his hands in
 his front-pockets to keep it to his waist, the
 note flattened against him. He took no short-
 cuts today.

The sun blinked drowsily. In clearings he
 saw it was not the sun blinking, but tree-trunks
 and house-tops fleetingly screening it, but he
 liked thinking the sun blinked. Up the hill at
 home, where trees did not frustrate the sun so
 often, he liked thinking it was a hole on the
 edge of another world. This side of the sun once
 a vacuum, empty of light, the sun a hole light
 pours through to fill the need. He had tried
 painting it at art-class at the Y and it had always
 turned out ludicrous, a round lemon or a yellow
 beachball.

As the sidewalk steepened under him sun-
 light caught in his eyelashes. Alice Holyoke had
 a way of letting sunlight strike her square on,
 and not moving a face-muscle, he had seen that
 at the hospital-staff families' picnic last summer.
 She had big eyes, but they were not puffed-
 looking like Miss McDoormat's. For a split-
 second, Miss McDoormat's pivoting towards
 the note had been beautiful, but Alice always
 moved in a way that tripped up his heart. Lawn-
 bowling at that picnic she had look so small, yet
 so sweeping.

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He could smell waffles when he entered the
 verandah. Aunt Jemima waffles were his favor-
 ite lunch. "Her, Eric!" Mrs Eagles called as he
 hung up his windbreaker. "Guess what I've got
 for you?"

Mr Eagles had his elbows on the table, fingers
 interlocked as if to begin here-is-the-church-here
 is-the-steeple-open-the-door-let-in-the-people.

Butter melted on Eric's waffles. "The girls've
 finished already" he mother said, working at
 the bread-board. "What took you so long?"

"Volleyball meeting?" his father suggested.
 Eric grunted and they seemed to accept that
 as an answer.

"As you can see, your father's o'kay" Mrs
 Eagles went on. "He just needs rest, he'd had
 too many night-calls the past month I've always
 said it's crazy that doctors keep worse care of
 their health than anybody else."

Mr Eagles shushed her. He was listening to
 the news. Eric was not listening to the news.
 The waffles in his mouth tasked like mucilage.

How had Miss McDoormat seen him do it?
 He had once thought of teachers with glasses
 as having slender mirrors around the rims to
 spy behind their backs, but how had Miss Mc-
 Doormat seen it? With her eyes that looked
 like that had watched an eclipse without glasses.
 She must have seen it more than once. She
 must have tried to ignore it until Billy Hamilton
 yanked his nose in hilarity.

His mother always told him he used too
 much cornsyrup on his waffles. He had used
 more than usual today.

While stuffing down the first waffle he had
 been sitting on his right hand. When he slid it
 out the back of it was imprinted with corduroy.
 The lines ran one way, unlike the waffles'
 crisscross--the hand was reddened and asleep--
 he flexed it--turned it over--saw wrist-tendons
 flash like heat-lightning. He crossed the hand to
 his shirt-pocket, the note peeking out. After
 she'd read the note Miss McDoormat's cheeks
 had gone pink, pink like the edges of her eyes.

"You gotta test for us to sign?" Mr Eagles
 asked, the weather and sports over. He had

seen Eric's hand hesitate on the paper

"If this was a rotten test I'd feel better. This
 is worse than a rotten test. That's all Eric said.
 He pulled it out and, though it had been like a
 brick in his pocket, he flicked it across. As his
 father picked it up, Eric's hand circled his milk-
 glass. He lifted it and over the rim saw the note
 being opened. He drank.

Mr Eagles looked bland, as if about to read
 a name drawn from a hat. He twiddled his
 hear. Something rose in his throat. He started
 laughing. He thumped the table. He called his
 wife. "Mother" he said "My God, Mother, come
 and see what we have here." His laugh became
 a roar. She came over. She read the note that
 said *Miss D. s got on falsies*, and squinted, and
 smiled. She didn't laugh but she smiled.

Eric left his last waffle and ran up to his
 room.

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Eric stayed home that afternoon. In the
 garage he played ping-pong with the wall, in his
 room he hit blunt chords on his ukelele. The
 ukelele had come from Grammie Eagles one
 Christmas and, though it had lived in the closet
 since, that afternoon it was oddly consoling.
 His mother's consolation was to say he hadn't
 desecrated a shrine, he's father's to say we all
 occasionally fall into deviltry. Eric knew they
 wouldn't understand him saying they didn't
 understand, so he didn't say it.

He went to bed early and rose late enough
 the next morning not to have any breakfast.
 Saturday was usually his favorite day.

After lunch he decided to paint in the gar-
 age. Once he had taken art-lessons at the Y on
 Saturdays. He had dropped out because they
 had always specified the subjects. Palm beaches.
 Bulldogs. Horse-races. Fir trees. Alley-cats.
 Clipper ships. Mexican women.

The old paintings, stiff and curling, were in
 the shaky chest-of-drawers in the back of the
 garage. Eric looked at the Mexican woman he
 had painted a year or two before. He looked at
 his Queen Elizabeth and his Laura Secord, his
 mother in a family-portrait by the fireplace, his
 Mary in snarled straw by soulful-eyed cows and
 a dumpy-looking manger. They now puzzled
 him all cube-bodied and flat-chested, all wo-
 manking non-bloomers-even if in grade five,
 with non one else home, he had accepted Ron
 Kickle's challenge and, after drawing the cur-
 tains, shone Eaton's Catalogue brasserie-ads
 onto the wall with a magnejector.

After putting back the old sheets he mixed
 some paints on a palette. Beside a dab of black,
 he mixed for different greens. Then on fresh
 paper he made the trees of Bertrand Street
 and the two grackles plummeting at a crow.
 But it became two cows plummeting at a
 grackle and he didn't want that. He set the
 painting aside.

Light spun through the window, searching
 out dust in the air. Eric started painting lom-
 bardy-poplars fighting off frost, but the brush
 dragged and dawdled. The hand felt as if it had
 been strapped. He stood there a while, the
 other hand holding the palette as if it were part
 of it.

