

# Kiss at the Gate

by Frank D. Moore

When Daddy came home from war,  
at night, and appeared just outside the backyard gate  
in his army drab, Grandmother and I  
stood waiting at the kitchen window,  
I, tan as an egg from the henhouse, in overalls and T-shirt,  
holding a wing of her bibbed apron  
(all of its flowers washed and washed again to white);  
while Mother, in the pink-checked dress  
she wore for digging up potatoes,  
walked across the yard in lamplight from the screened-in back porch.  
The last seen of her on the edge of light:  
her muscled calves, tan, smooth.  
As she opened the gate, he stepped inside the yard,  
out of the dark mouth of the orchard behind him  
and the scent of apples.

Like two geese passing  
who brush each other bill to bill,  
rumps moving in a slow semicircle,  
my parents stretched their necks toward each other,  
and, under the black sky, touched on the lips.  
I knew then my friends were wrong and I dead right,  
last winter as they skated on the groaning creek  
in their heavy shoes,  
laughing how I had been born out of my mother's belly,  
and I, on the bank in snow boot-deep,  
insisting: No, no.  
She got me from the hospital.  
I was dressed and ready to go.