

PHILIP SCHULTZ

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Every night at Kodak as he sweeps the floors,
Father dreams of the vending machines he'll buy.
He comes home after dawn and sits at the kitchen table
staring out the window, his lips silently moving.
He wants the biggest vending business in upstate,
New York, that's why he buys new machines
without paying for the old ones, Mother says,
so he can be a big shot. All the things she never says
gives her headaches so I rub her neck as she holds ice
to her eyes. After someone on the phone yells, she
eats ice cream and Mars bars. "What must you think
of me, crying all day? Please don't be like me, don't
agree with everyone. . . ." Father falls asleep pulling
his pants off but soon there's coffee in J.C. Penny's
and five kinds of soda in Abe's Pool Hall. . . while
Uncle pays all the bills, walks around in torn boxers
making us watch TV and eat in the dark. When he
tells me to draw a "pic'chur of a horse drawin' a wagon,"
I draw a horse with a pencil in its hoof and hide as he
rips it up, raves all night. In this house, where everyone's
a genius, talks only to themselves, and spits three times
over their left shoulder, everything is a riddle.