

Kiel M. Gregory

SUPPER

Two toddlers dressed in solid colors crouch knees-to-chest over a water runoff grate. They drop driveway pebbles through the cast iron lattice. Gravity accepts their stone offerings and carries them dutifully to the water below. They giggle and play in their curiosity. In the memory this photograph recreates, I sip a homemade iced tea and watch my sons learn the natural forces of the world. The cool summer breeze, blown over the lake, ruffles their wild blonde hair. The sun warms them. They run. They wrestle. They chase each other for no purpose than to take turns being caught. Life is simple for us in this memory. They still know me, their father and caregiver. They know my voice because I read to them until we all fall asleep in the same bed. They squeal the names they have made up for our games. Tickling is *Surgery*. *Robot* is me walking stiffly and making machine noises. *Supper* is when I take my favorite wooden cooking spoon and stir small toys and trinkets in a large steel stock pot. We sit together around the pot, take turns taste-testing a soup only we can see. My eldest suggests a sprinkling of cheese. He shakes a few plastic farm animals over the pot. My youngest picks our cat up around her belly, waves her, legs dangling, over the make-believe meal, says *Her fur is spicy*. We count while we cook. When they say it's ready, they clap and shout while I ladle Legos and Lincoln Logs into yellow bowls. We sit on the carpet, together, three boys blowing over soup spoons, waiting for it to be safe.