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Jail Time

Here's the scoundrel, my father said.
He was in my shed smoking.
I've got gasoline cans in there.
The police sergeant looked at me
with eyes grey as gun barrels.
I was nine. My father had already
taken a switch to me. This way, boy,
the sergeant said.

"Ok, son, this is your home
for the next few years."
The cell's closing door rang
like stones dropped
into a metal bucket.
"You'll be a man when your father
comes to retrieve you," he said.
I burst
into tears. My father
begged the sergeant to give me
one more chance. He relented
and I went home as somber
as a stone. I never
lit a cigarette
again.

An Aging Bachelor

I'm 52, and the attractive women have been harvested.

What have I got to offer the few stragglers
who are the single scene?

My scalp is receding. My nose wanders like a fence in sand.

I have a sympathetic ear, and my pockets empty
for my friends faster than outpourings of advice.

"What girl wants that kind of man?
A woman wants security," the widow Lucy says.
"Not someone digging under cushions for rent money.

Why are you angry? I ask. "I'm not," she says and storms off.

What was that about,

I wonder.

Her Scent

Always there is the hint
of perfume on his shirts,
lining the pockets of his coats.
The same brunette hair clinging
to his sleeves.

But after all some things one picks up
innocently. Like the scents
of Passion flowers fawned off on you
by the wind's quick hands.

Or the scent of a cigarette from the bloke
next to you at a watering hole
who disappears into his drink

and leaves his smoke
on your clothing.

Maybe the other woman no one speaks of
will drift away, become no more
than a dusting of snow in the air.

Maybe tomorrow you won't harbor the suspicion
that the underwear you slip on carries

her scent, the scent of wet leaves

that cling disgustedly

to you

Bob Bradshaw is a programmer living in Redwood City, CA, with his wife, his punk rock son, and their schizophrenic cat. His poems appeared recently in *Eclectica*, *Umbrella*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Slow Trains*, *Orange Room Review*, *Flutter*, *Poems Niedergasse* and *Cha*.