
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jay Rogoff: Three Poems

Jay Rogoff · Tuesday, May 12th, 2026

My Father's Cartoons: Get Lost!

What terrible thing has this boy asked his father
that he should clench the pages of his paper,
swivel his head in a one-eighty twist,
and shout in bold black, "Get Lost!"

The little son clutches a model plane
and tries to shrink away from his father's rage,
his other hand splayed flat as a windowpane.
Can we blame him for wanting to exit the page?

There'd be—what had I done?—such simmering
between my parents until one would yell
and one would corkscrew off a wedding ring.
I'd watch it bounce off the living room wall.

That's only the first panel. In the coda,
sitting on a desk, wearing a policeman's cap,
the boy smiles. A sergeant holds the toy plane up
and an officer hands him ice cream and a soda.

*

My Father's Cartoons: Haircut

The little boy with curly hair
is led by his beautiful mother
to the booster seat on the barber's chair
with its strop of supple leather.

See how they walk in perfect step
to the place of execution.
Between the two a wide gap
opens, and frantic motion

possesses the boy, whose mouth won't close
 as globular tears roll
 down his cheeks, while she stands close
 behind, holding him still.

The barber's seen it all before.
 He snips and sprinkles tonic.
 The mother's rising temperature
 moistens his white tunic.

I see my mother in my father's joke,
 this six-panel cartoon.
 Shorn of my halo, my hair slicked back,
 I wear a little grin,

and when my mother sees my curls
 gone, and my baby years
 on the floor, she hugs me tight as she falls
 hard to her knees in tears.

*

Home

My mother says, "I want to go home."
 We sold her flat to pay for care.
 She has no place to call her own.
 We visit her on the memory floor.

I reminisce about the peach
 custard we loved to lick at Carvel
 and the praying mantis I once dared touch
 till she said, "Stop!" and lit a Pall Mall.

"Tell me how you made egg creams"
 (in the family candy store on Cleveland
 Street, Brooklyn). "My father!" she screams,
 "Jesus, he was such a bastard."

What can she mean, "I want to go home"?
 She can't for her life remember where.
 If she knew I've made this poem,
 she'd yell at me and yell some more.

In fact, she does own real estate,
 a private place to call her own,
 with humid earth-tones walled about
 and a green roof that they'll keep mown.

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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