

John Kinsella

BLUE BAGS/TALISMANS

Blue bags
dangle from the arm
of the mangle,
swinging
hypnotically as the limp
tongues of shirts flop
from the machine's
red lips. My grandmother tells me
as she cranks and feeds this
creature with bad blood
that one day my auntie ended up
blue from head to foot.
She'd hidden behind the rockery
covered with mats of nasturtium flowers,
bees sparking in their cellophane hearts.
A man had chased her from school
and pursued her into the garden,
had searched long and hard
as she remained still and silent,
bee stings probing her skin
like sharpened raddle sticks.
Blue bags sucked the poison
from those wounds thirty
years back, and now
swing like talismans
of deliverance
amongst the loads
of laundry that fill
my grandmother's
memory.