

## THE WALK

First touch before first kiss  
good little parochial school girl  
new to menstruating  
let alone wise to the ways of boys  
instructed by my Irish Catholic mother  
to walk the two miles to church  
by myself  
for Friday afternoon Lenten service

Perfect day for a walk  
the sights so familiar  
the curving road  
pretty suburban houses  
the smell of earth waking up  
crocus and daffodils stretching up  
the breeze fresh

No one was around  
occasionally a car would pass by  
or my Mary Janes would crunch a pebble  
otherwise all was quiet  
and solitary  
I was feeling independent  
enjoying the reverie  
of my own little girl thoughts

One sloping hill away from town  
and the sanctuary of St. John's  
a boy walked toward me  
I did not know him  
He was cute  
I was shy  
and did not look at him

He drew closer  
and on approach  
suddenly veered to my side of the walkway  
reached out  
cradled my crotch in his hands  
murmured something I could not quite hear  
and kept going  
As if  
As if

As if  
nothing was out of line  
nothing was unusual  
nothing was wrong

I kept going  
not sure what had happened  
not sure why my cheeks felt so hot  
not sure why I felt ashamed  
What had he said?  
What was I to do?

I did not know  
so I kept walking  
my feet did not stop  
I did not look back  
and never told a single soul