

Salad for Two

Henry L. Miles

I sense someone beside me
and see Emily's eyes on my hands
and the knife in the sink.
She asks, *What are you slicing?*

*A leek, an organic leek
but it's spelled le-e-k.*
She asks again. I say, *leek.*
She says, *the other word. Organic?*
*It means the farmer did not spray the leek
to kill the leek bugs.*

Emily learns kale
as scissored strips fall into the bowl
and she points to specks of mud at the end of each stem.

She watches me wrestle off a rubber band.
I know what that is, she says. It's broccoli.

I skin a stem, cut me a slice
praise the flavor
hold a piece to Emily on my knife.
She eats broccoli raw.

A slice of beet glances off the bowl
and onto the floor.
Emily reaches the piece to my hand.
Grandpa, your finger looks like it's bleeding.

Emily learns flax seeds and pumpkin seeds
counting spoonfuls into the coffee grinder
learns flax seed oil watching the Barleans' bottle
drain yellow into a salad bowl.

I sprinkle cayenne pepper.
She contorts her face.
Grandpa, can I help you with the lemons?
She has seen us lever our squeeze machine.

I cut two lemons, place one in the squeezer
and hold tight to its metal legs.

Emily grasps the long handle with two hands
bends her knees
and pulls her feet off the floor.

Juice drizzles into a measuring cup
and Emily's eyes, teeth, and the gap between them smile.

We squeeze out the other halves
pour lemon juice on cut vegetables, cottage cheese
flax oil, salt, pepper, seeds, cilantro and stir.

I dip a fork into the mixture,
offer the tines to Emily.
She lips them clean, says, *It's okay, not too hot.*

I return from the cupboard with two plates
place them on the island
and go for two knives and two forks
but Emily is already gone.

She probably went upstairs to see her parents
or enter the cross-country contest
or fill out her college application
or apply for a passport for her mission to England

or be fitted for her wedding dress
or attend her child's mission farewell.
Emily will return, and I'll be gone.

HENRY L. MILES, a retired Foreign Service officer, presently lives in Orem, Utah. He and his wife, Carol, have five children and nineteen grandchildren. He occasionally works as a freelance editor and spends most of his writing time on family narratives and personal essays. He has published in *Dialogue*, *Wasatch Review International*, and *Irreantum* and served a term as treasurer of the Association for Mormon Letters.