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 l-e-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.