

For Such Are the Rules

by Sandra Kolankiewicz

How was I to know I would not recognize the signs I had been given until I was nearly old? How we grew up surrounded by Indian ruins? How those of us whose family came here early have no collective memory of them. I have one arrow head, some kind of ochre-colored hammer or weapon, a grinding rock, and a chunky stone found in a spring by a stream—now someone's pond. I stood in the skunk cabbage in the middle of a swamp and pulled out of pristine water artifacts so important the science teacher had to cut one of them in two, the same kind of destruction we inflicted when we arrived here limping in our tight shoes, asking for help to survive the winter. Here, we said, let us cut your rock in half even though it perfectly fits the pestle found in that spring by a little girl who left her house early in the morning to avoid the ramifications of the night before, who would have shared her breakfast or blanket with anyone she found in the woods on that spring morning, for such are the rules of hospitality.