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James B. Nicola

Lucy Van Pelt

Dreaming that Schroeder loved her as his queen,  
she let her dreams grow into an obsession.  
Then he ran off with someone seventeen  
and she fell into a bout of depression  
so bad her brother had to bring her to  
Emergency. From there, Intensive Care.  
Then they transferred her to the State Home where  
she told me, when she finally realized who  
I was, that she'd never even been kissed  
by anyone but Snoopy. Now she lives  
in the city, alone. Her therapist  
tells her that only someone who forgives  
herself can be healed. So she keeps a list  
of faults she shows me when I am in town

and drop by. Though I wish she'd put it down,  
she's almost proud of her new ones. They're all  
part of the process, she says, they bring hope.

I usually bring more snapshots for her wall  
of Linus, her brother, my sister Sal-  
ly, and their children, who are our nephews  
and nieces, but seem only to confuse  
her, sometimes, they're so numerous now. *Char-*  
*lie Brown*, she cries, through wild tears, *Charlie Brown*,  
*you never should have let me jerk that ball.*  
*You must hate me today!* I tell her *Nope.*

She shakes. I ease her to a seat, assure  
her, *Childhood trials, they say, build character.*  
*Don't think about it. I don't*—nor of her,  
often. But I do sit with her an hour.

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James Nicola's poems have appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *The Southwest Review*, *Poetry East*, *Rattle* and elsewhere. He has two poetry collections: *Manhattan Plaza* and *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater*. His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a *Choice* award.