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## A Love Story

*Kathryn Hellerstein*

My daughter is in love. They met at school,  
a year ago July, and they declared  
right off the bat they wanted to get married.  
It hardly matters that they're four years old.

Each day he runs to greet her with a hug,  
then they get down to serious business,  
playing at dress-up, building castles with  
bright plastic blocks that fit like lock and key,

or practicing their tricks on the monkey bars,  
strong little arms propelling them, their legs  
flailing and kicking high above the ground.  
Timmy has invited the whole class

to the wedding celebration when they're sixty.  
For now, they concentrate on problems: Who  
can run the fastest? Which of the story books  
to borrow from the library? And they

discuss: If a Jewish girl and a Catholic boy  
get married, will their children have to be  
one or the other, or will they be blessed  
with gifts galore to open by the light

of a menorah standing near a Christmas tree?  
The would-be in-laws, Timmy's mother and I,  
drink tea and talk around the kitchen table.  
Upstairs, the children act out "Sleeping Beauty"

(the little brother is the wicked fairy),  
while she and I, conspirators with fate,  
foresee an unhappy ending. Even if  
her marriage weren't dissolving, even if

her husband were not homesick for Bangkok  
and taking Timmy with him, for how long  
they don't yet know, and if she were not forced  
to look for jobs in Kansas and Montana,

our children would end up at different schools:  
Neighbors, they'd grow into their difference.  
This, their perfect moment, frightens us.  
We nod and smile like dolls with springs for necks.

*Kathryn Hellerstein's poems have appeared in Kerem, Poetry, Tikkun, Reading Ruth, and Four Hundred Years of Jewish Women's Spirituality. Her book of translations from the Yiddish, Selected Poems of Kadya Molodowsky, is forthcoming from Wayne State University Press. She teaches Yiddish at the University of Pennsylvania.*