

Snakeskin

by Adam Palumbo

At Alan Gatino's house in second grade we found a rattlesnake skin underneath the porch. We showed his mother, who screamed but collected herself quickly. She told us to listen for the loud shaking and to stay away. Alan's mother was not the proactive type with regard to venomous pit vipers. I had never heard Alan mention his father. He was filled with anger, not a very nice boy. He kept rotten eggs in a hole in his backyard to throw at his little sister. I only played with him because there were no other boys my age in our small neighborhood. I never thought of him as a friend because of all the nasty things he would call me when we were out of earshot of his mother. I wondered where he'd heard those kinds of things. He was often pulled out of school, for fighting at recess and other things. I tried not to be near him at school, so that I wouldn't get in trouble alongside him. On the day that we found the rattlesnake skin, I got scared of playing in the yard and wanted to go home. Alan called me some name or another and shoved me onto the hard pavement of the driveway. I started walking down the street back to my house. As I looked back, Alan was crawling back under the porch.

