

Smiles are for Suckers

by Jim Ward

I walked her home.
She lived eight blocks
in the opposite direction of me,
but it made her smile
—I made her smile.
In the fourth grade, a smile
is all it takes.
Of course, a smile still holds
quite a bit of weight
even at age 26.

As we walked and talked
about how she loved to laugh,
and of my natural ability
to scale any tree,
I was enjoying a fifty-cent
strawberry sucker
when she asked if she
could share it with me.

You want to try my sucker?
It had been in my mouth;
had my spit on it.
She said she didn't care.
I said okay
and passed it
her way.

We walked.
We talked.
She offered the sucker
back to me.
I hesitated.
She smiled.
I agreed.

Then we talked about her,
and talked about me,
for the next few hours
high up in her tree.

