Brief Return to a Paradise Lost

By John L. Holgerson

The only true paradise is always the paradise that we have lost.
—Marcel Proust

For a few years after our parents died,
there were instances when I entered
the back door foyer of the house
where my brother and I grew up and,
even though no one lived there then,
except the ghosts of birthdays and
Christmases past, I could smell the
fried chicken our mother cooked for
dinner after church on most Sundays.

I'd stand there, close my eyes,
an adult playing Statues, and that
sweet aroma would be so amplified
I could hear our animated discussions
and laughter at the dining room
table where we all sat and remember
what growing up there was like
and how safe and how loved I felt.

On those occasions, I did not want
to turn the key so the door into the
kitchen would open, for the chimeras
of smell and sounds would vanish,
replaced by the silence, loss,
sadness, and regret that then sat
in those four chairs placed neatly
around that once so well-used table.

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