

Story Problem

From the deep well of his striped bib overalls
Father would pull his pocket knife

and score the candy bars—
always two, always something

with nuts and stretchy caramel
and covered in thin skins of chocolate.

He'd divide each sweet sentence
into six carefully equal phrases.

Much later, with five loves of my own,
I recall his diligent portioning,

his steadying the knife-holding hand
with the palm of his other,

and leveling his eyes
before making the final divisions.

He'd disregard what he knew
of the hour's bone-picked child,

disallowing any inclinations to oversize
the portion meant for her

or to undercut the portion
for the chronically grumbling one.

For the fortunate one, he was always
more than fair.

—Marilyn Bushman-Carlton

*This poem won honorable mention
in the 2007 BYU Studies poetry contest.*