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## Poetry by Ellen McGrath Smith



## Therapy

There are things you can assemble,  
small and temporary, on a table,  
or on the floor between spread legs,  
like a child blocking out  
the adult chaos all around her:

## Therapy

Published on Talking Writing (<https://mail.talkingwriting.com>)

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a silver dollar seedpod  
near an actual silver dollar,  
a pine cone on a mirror, a fire lizard  
dried in its rearing-up position,  
one green plastic soldier, a tarnished  
Saint Christopher medal, a stamp  
steamed off a letter from Japan.  
Call it a microcosm or just let it stand  
for as long as it stands, for as long  
as it takes your attention and care.  
Move the objects around,  
scratch out new stories or new endings  
for the stories you've inherited.  
The story with a car in a forest  
at the edge of the world.  
The story of war, a dragon  
scorching the earth for miles.  
The story of the raging father.  
Seed money, the future, the hair  
of the dog. None of it is meant  
to last, especially since it's all  
made of the past. There's a stream  
behind your house you've never seen.  
At night, before you sleep, you hear it.

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## Art Information

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Ellen McGrath Smith teaches at the University of Pittsburgh. Her poetry has appeared in the *New York Times*, *American Poetry Review*, *Talking Writing*, *Los Angeles Review*, and other journals and anthologies. Her books include *Scatter, Feed* (Seven Kitchens, 2014) and *Nobody's Jackknife* (West End Press, 2015).

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