



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Rose Has a New Walker

Karen Mandell

Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal, Volume 11, Number 1, Spring 2006, pp. 84-85 (Article)

Published by Bridges Association



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/195414>



# R

KAREN MANDELL  
ROSE HAS A NEW WALKER

We buy it online. She got her old one,  
standard issue gray aluminum, at the hospital  
after she fell at Susie's house last summer.  
It's a man's walker, and she holds her elbows out like bent wings  
when she grasps the handles. It's too wide for her.  
I toss out the question one day, if you had a new walker  
what color would you choose.  
*Blue*, she says, just like that. I order blue.  
When it comes, we connect the hand brakes,  
attach the basket and the seat,  
pull the plastic off the wheels.  
*Can I return it*, Rose says.  
Absolutely not, I tell her. It's from the Internet.  
She feels better knowing there's no choice.  
But it's always good to try again.  
*Maybe I won't need it. I ride the exercise bike now.*  
*And in Chi Gong class I stand up longer.*  
*Before I did the exercises from the chair.*  
*Anyway, it's not blue. I think it's black.*

So for that we'll return it? It's navy.  
 Under the lamp we compromise on navy black.  
 I tell her to try the seat. But always remember  
 To press the hand brakes when you sit down.  
 It's like the brakes on a bike.  
 She doesn't get it. She never rode a bike, she says,  
 she roller skated everywhere, to the botanical conservatory,  
 to the library. She tightened the skates with a key she wore  
 around her neck. When they broke, and that was often,  
 her father would fix them, a tragedy you kids never met him.  
 I ask Rose to push the walker in the hall.  
 She can't help smiling; stately, royal she glides like the King's  
     barge  
 down the Thames. The waters part before her; I hear Handel's  
     music.  
*It's nice, she says. But what should I do with the old one. A shame  
     to waste it.*  
 It'll be a spare, I say. Maybe we'll take it in the car when we go  
     out.  
 Remember when Daddy taught me how to ride, I say. Running  
     beside me,  
 his hand on the fender and then letting go.  
*Of course I remember, she says, he taught all of you.*  
 And then I was free to pedal around the block, up to the drug  
     store,  
 turn right, turn right again, over and over, centrifugally  
 pulled by the gravity of home.