

Second Childhood

Walter was sitting half undressed with his legs dangling over the examination bed. “Listen to me, Walter,” his physician said. “You’re dangerously overweight. You’ve got to do something about this. I want you to go out and buy an exercise bike and use it every single day. If you do, you’ll find that even in two weeks the fat around your waist will be rinsed away. But you’ve got to keep at it.” Walter did as he was told. Every morning he dutifully got on the machine. But he hated it. He found himself just sitting on the bike and staring out the window. He saw the newly fallen snow and wanted to play as he had decades ago. He got off the bike, put on his heavy jacket, and went outside. He made a snowman. He built a snow fort. Conrad, his balding neighbor saw this, and he built a fort as well. They dug up some ancient sleds and raced each other, day after day, week after week, throughout the winter. At the end, Walter returned to his physician who was overjoyed with his progress. “What did I tell you? An exercise bike and determination rinses away the fat in no time!” But Walter knew better. He realized that snow and sledding rinse the waist.

