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BABY DOE

A political history of tragedy.

BY JILL LEPORE

Last June, a woman walking her dog on Deer Island, in Boston Harbor, came across a black plastic garbage bag on the beach. Inside was a very little girl, dead. The woman called for help and collapsed in tears. Police searched the island; divers searched the water; a medical examiner collected the body. The little girl had dark eyes and pale skin and long brown hair. She weighed thirty pounds. She was wearing white-and-black polka-dot pants. She was wrapped in a zebra-striped fleece blanket. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children said that no child matching her description had been reported missing. "Someone has to know who this child is," an official there said. But for a very long time no one did.

A forensic artist fed a morgue photograph into a computer and made a likeness, a dead child brought back to life. The Massachusetts State Police put the picture on its Facebook page. By the Fourth of July, more than twenty-four million people had looked at it, posting thirty-four thousand comments. Three days later, the number of visitors had risen to forty-five million. And still no one knew her name. Authorities began calling her Baby Doe.

Deer Island sits among more than thirty islands in Boston Harbor. English colonists named a lot of them for animals. There's a Sheep Island and a Calf Island, too. Deer Island used to be remote, but a hurricane in 1938 left a strip of sand behind, attaching the island to the town of Winthrop by a neck of land. There are windmills there now, and a state-of-the-art wastewater-treatment plant. When the body was found, work at the plant came to a standstill. "People were devastated," Susan Brazil says. Brazil works for the water authority, and she's also from Winthrop, a town whose population is predominantly white, working class, and Catholic. Brazil started collecting money. Everyone wanted to do some-

thing; no one knew what. "The photograph just ripped your heart out," she says. People from the town and workers at the plant, wanting to hold that little girl into their arms, began leaving flowers and notes and holding vigils. "She's our little girl," a priest said at a memorial Mass in July. "She belongs to us." Workers at the plant placed on the ground a sculpture of bronze: a fawn, like Bambi, curled up, sleeping, a baby doe.

Authorities pasted the computer-generated photograph on billboards all over the state, with a plea: "Did You Know Me? Please...tell the POLICE my NAME!" There was a number to call, and another to text. "Remember me? Then please tell the police!"

Remember her? Nearly everything about this story reminded me of something that happened during the Blizzard of 1978, when I was eleven. The snow began falling on February 5th. The next day, in Somerville, just outside Boston, Edward R. Gallison, thirty-five, came in from the storm and knocked two-year-old Jennifer Gallison into a chair. Or maybe he pushed her against a refrigerator. Or maybe she fell and hit her head. She'd been sick, with a fever of 104 or 105. Maybe pneumonia killed her. The facts never quite came out. After the little girl fell to the floor, her mother, Denise Gallison, twenty-two, wrapped her in a blanket and put her to bed. In the morning, Edward Gallison moved the bundle to an unheated storage room in the back of the second-floor apartment. He left the window open. The room filled with snow. Winter ended; the snow began to melt. Then, on Good Friday, Edward Gallison dressed his daughter in a snowsuit, hat, and boots and put her into a garbage bag. He carried the bag down the street and left it in a trash barrel in front of a statue of the Blessed Mother. The body of Jennifer Gallison was never found.

More than a hundred inches of snow

fell in Boston last winter, storm after storm. So the Blizzard of 1978 was on my mind when, not long after daffodils poked up through the last of the long-linger snow, the lifeless body of a little girl was discovered in a trash bag on Deer Island, cast away.

Baby Doe had no fingerprints. The tide had damaged the skin on her hands. Her DNA didn't match the DNA of anyone in the F.B.I.'s database of missing children. The State Police sent two hundred strands of her hair, and one tooth, to a lab in Salt Lake City, to try to figure out where her drinking water came from. Pollen found on her clothes went to a lab in Houston. There was soot in her hair; it placed her as having lived in Boston. And still no one came forward to name her. The letters and toys left for her on Deer Island were getting ruined in the rain. Lenny Young, who works for the plant's Buildings and Grounds and keeps a photograph of his own daughter on his phone's home screen, started bringing them into a storeroom, for safekeeping. There are Teddy bears, for comfort; lions, for courage; and tiny deer, namesakes.

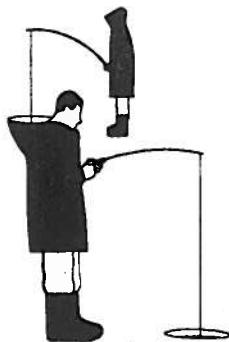
The loss of a child is an unbearable grief, the murder of a child an unthinkable atrocity. Thinking the unthinkable tends to have dreadful consequences. The Baby Doe story was covered by the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Herald*, and New England television news. It was picked up by CNN, *People*, the *Times*, the *Washington Post*, Fox News, and the *Guardian*. It had every element of a developing crusade: outrage, pity, and sanctimony. Historically, crusades begun in response to the murders of children have had terrible results. In 1979, a boy in New York City named Etan Patz disappeared; his father was a professional photographer; soon, photographs of missing children were being printed on milk cartons. There were claims, at the time, that fifty thousand children disappeared every year. The

real number was less than three hundred. The Gallison story and stories of missing children had been hard for me to forget, partly because of those milk boxes but also because, in 1980, ABC-TV broadcast a one-hour documentary about the case called "Denise: The Tragedy of Child Abuse." Facebook is the new milk box; the tragedy is the same.

The Baby Doe story has unfolded against a backdrop of controversy involving the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. In December, 2013, a five-year-old boy named Jeremiah Oliver was reported missing from his home in Fitchburg. He hadn't been seen since September, but, despite the fact that the Massachusetts D.C.F. had been involved with the family since 2011, when it first received reports of the neglect of three children, then ages seven, five, and two, Jeremiah's disappearance had not been noticed by his caseworkers. Governor Deval Patrick asked the Office of the Child Advocate to conduct an investigation. "How can a social worker not notice when a five-year-old boy on her caseload disappears?" the O.C.A. asked, in a report filed in January, 2014. That spring, the boy's body was found in a suitcase by the side of a highway, and his mother and her boyfriend were arrested and charged with assault, kidnapping, and child endangerment; both pleaded not guilty. Patrick commissioned the Child Welfare League of America to conduct a review, led by Linda Spears, into the D.C.F. His administration, pressured by the state legislature, accepted the resignation of the D.C.F. commissioner, who had held the office for only a year.

Whatever has gone wrong in Massachusetts has gone far worse in other parts of the United States. Nineteen states (including Massachusetts) are being sued for their systems' failure to protect children; Mississippi's Division of Family and Children's Services is struggling to avoid being put into receivership. Last year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation ranked Massachusetts third best in the nation in the over-all well-being of children. The best is not good.

In January, 2015, when Charlie Baker



was inaugurated the new governor of Massachusetts, he named Spears as the new D.C.F. commissioner. She took office in February. Not long after that, a seven-year-old boy who was in the custody of his father, but whose case had been overseen by the D.C.F. for more than five months, was brought to the hospital with burns on his feet and bruises all over his body and weighing only thirty-eight

pounds; he has been in a coma ever since. How had caseworkers not noticed that the boy was being beaten and starved? The D.C.F.'s investigation into the case concluded that the department has been "unable to successfully implement and sustain meaningful change over time." Spears had been in office for barely four months when, in June, Baby Doe washed up on Deer Island in a plastic garbage bag as dark and as fathomless as the very bottom of the sea.

The overwhelming majority of children who die from abuse or neglect are under the age of four; roughly half are less than a year old. In September, 2015, the New England Center for Investigative Reporting, a "Spotlight"-style nonprofit, released a story called "Out of the Shadows: Shining Light on State Failures to Learn from Rising Child Abuse and Neglect Deaths," reporting that a hundred and ten Massachusetts children died between 2009 and 2013 in circumstances suggesting abuse or neglect, and that a third of them had been under the care of the D.C.F. (This rate is the national average: across the country, about one in three children who die from maltreatment belongs to a family that had previously drawn the attention of child-protection services.) Long before anyone knew her name, it seemed all too likely that this would turn out to be the case with Baby Doe.

Even the best reporting, though, can't help missing a feature of the story that can be seen only from the vantage of history. Child protection is trapped in a cycle of scandal and reform. The D.C.F. was established in 1980, as the Department of Social Services, in response to the Gallison case. It was renamed the Department of Children and Families

in 2008, under the Act Protecting Children in the Care of the Commonwealth, an omnibus reform that also created the Office of the Child Advocate, in response to the case of an eleven-year-old girl who was brought to an emergency room in a coma, having been severely beaten; one doctor said that her injuries were so grave it was as if she'd been in a high-speed car accident. Social workers had earlier investigated charges of abuse but had determined that the injuries were self-inflicted. The law came with virtually no new funding. (About the only mention of money, in the legislation itself, is this: "The department may pay a sum not to exceed \$1,100 for the funeral and burial of a child in its care.") It was passed in the midst of both a global financial collapse and an opiate epidemic. From the time that the D.C.F. got its name until 2014, its budget was cut every year; adjusted for inflation, more than a hundred and thirty million dollars was slashed. (In the wake of Jeremiah Oliver's death, money has begun to trickle back.)

Programs for the poor are poor programs. And they are made poorer when they fail, and when they are needed most. Natural disasters like blizzards, earthquakes, and hurricanes drive reform and the allocation of resources, leading to improvements in public safety. The tragic but ordinary deaths of people in situations in which people are likely to die don't usually change policy. When someone dies in an ambulance, that death is not generally followed by an investigation into the qualifications of E.M.T.s. "We don't stop funding FEMA when the economy gets bad," Maria Mossaides pointed out, when we met. Mossaides, an attorney, was hired by Michael Dukakis in 1977 and moved into child welfare soon after the Gallison disaster. Deval Patrick had hoped that Mossaides would be willing to serve as D.C.F. commissioner. Instead, she accepted Baker's offer to become the state's new director of the Office of the Child Advocate. One feature of a scandal-reform cycle—"Kids die and heads roll," she says—is a policy pendulum. "The pendulum has swung at least four or five times in the last forty years," Mossaides says. It swings between family preservation (keeping kids with their family of origin) and removal (removing kids from

their homes and severing parental rights so that the kids can be adopted). "We inevitably have cases where we don't get the safety assessment right," Mossaides says. "Then you have the high-profile death, and the pendulum will swing in the opposite direction." When Jeremiah Oliver was reported missing, the governor's office was boasting that the number of children in the care of the state was down to seven thousand: family preservation was the priority. Two years later, that number has risen to ninety-two hundred, a record. "Pull every kid" is what Mossaides suspects D.C.F. workers are being told. "The only way that happens is social workers have become afraid to leave kids with their parents."

This didn't start in 2008 or even in 1980. The child-protection movement has origins in 1837, with "Oliver Twist," Charles Dickens's indictment of England's Poor Laws. The policy pendulum was already so firmly in place by the eighteen-eighties that it was accurately described in a treatise called "Children of the State," by Florence Davenport-Hill, an early advocate for foster care: "First we find the children placed in homes, but not safeguarded," then "abuses are discovered" and the children are "in consequence massed together in some big institution" until there, too, still more abuses are discovered, and "in desperation they are dispersed again," until, once again, abuses are discovered in homes, and the children are sent to institutions. The oscillation lately isn't between foster homes and institutions but between reunification and termination of parental rights. The pattern remains the same.

Other patterns remain in place, too. Victorian child-savers enlisted public support by telling sensational stories involving the deaths of poor children, especially babies. It became a convention of the dead-baby story to suggest that poor women are not to be trusted with babies, and as a result the public favors rescuing children but not if it means helping women. As a rule, setting the interests of poor children against those of poor women leads to reforms that fail, which leads, a few years later, to another dead-baby story. This next time around, the reform itself is blamed for the death of the baby, and an opposite reform is proposed. It, too, fails. And then the cycle begins again.

"Baby farming," a term coined in a British medical journal in 1867, was what Victorian doctors called it when desperately poor women paid even poorer women to take care of their babies, or, rather, doctors said, to deliberately kill them; many of the babies died of maltreatment, others of outright starvation. In 1871, the Infant Life Protection Society proposed legislation requiring childcare providers to be licensed by the state. The National Society for Women's Suffrage formed a Committee for Amending the Law in Points Wherein It Is Injurious to Women, arguing not only that it would "legislate on matters affecting women without their consent" but also that it began "at the wrong end": it failed to address or even to see the real problem—the political and eco-

nomic inequality of women. In New York in 1874, the *Times* reported that a girl named Mary Ellen Wilson was "rescued" from her home by a charity worker whose husband happened to be a newspaper reporter. The rescue was made possible with the help of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This and other cases led to the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It did for children what its sister organization did for animals. "Lists of 'saved children' joined those kept for 'redeemed dogs,'" Judith Sealander reports in her jaundiced history, "The Failed Century of the Child." Sealander argues that the dead-baby story proved so successful because infant and childhood mortality was falling, fast. "Before the early



nineteenth century, the average child was the dead child," Sealander writes. "For most of human history, probably seven out of ten children did not live past the age of three." If Victorian- and Progressive-era middle-class moralists were newly concerned about the dead and dying babies of the poor, it was partly because their own babies were, for the first time, not dying. And the more the children of the better-off were cherished, and pampered, the worse the treatment of the children of the poor appeared to be. In 1920, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children issued a pamphlet, aimed at well-to-do children, inviting them to join the society's Junior Division but taking pains to protect them, even, from the pain of reading the stories of less fortunate children: "We cannot tell you much about our cases because they are too sad."

Denise Gallison was born Denise Sousa in 1955. Less than two years later, her father was convicted of sexually assaulting her oldest sister, who was five, and all five of the Sousa children were placed in the care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Denise went straight into the hospital. She was eighteen months

old and had hardly ever been taken out of her crib: she was malnourished and unable to stand. From the hospital, she went into foster care; in the course of fifteen years, she was placed in eleven homes and institutions by eighteen social workers. In 1960, when she was four, the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare determined that she was "not adoption material," because she was "socially, emotionally, and intellectually retarded." In 1962, while she was in the New England Home for Little Wanderers, she was diagnosed as suffering from "maternal deprivation"; at the age of six, an evaluation determined, she was "not able to relate in a meaningful way to others." One foster mother described her as "a very cunning, sadistic, malicious child." At fourteen, she was sent to a residential school for "mildly retarded" children, where she was given a hundred milligrams of Mellaril (an antipsychotic) and twenty-five milligrams of Elavil (an antidepressant) three times a day.

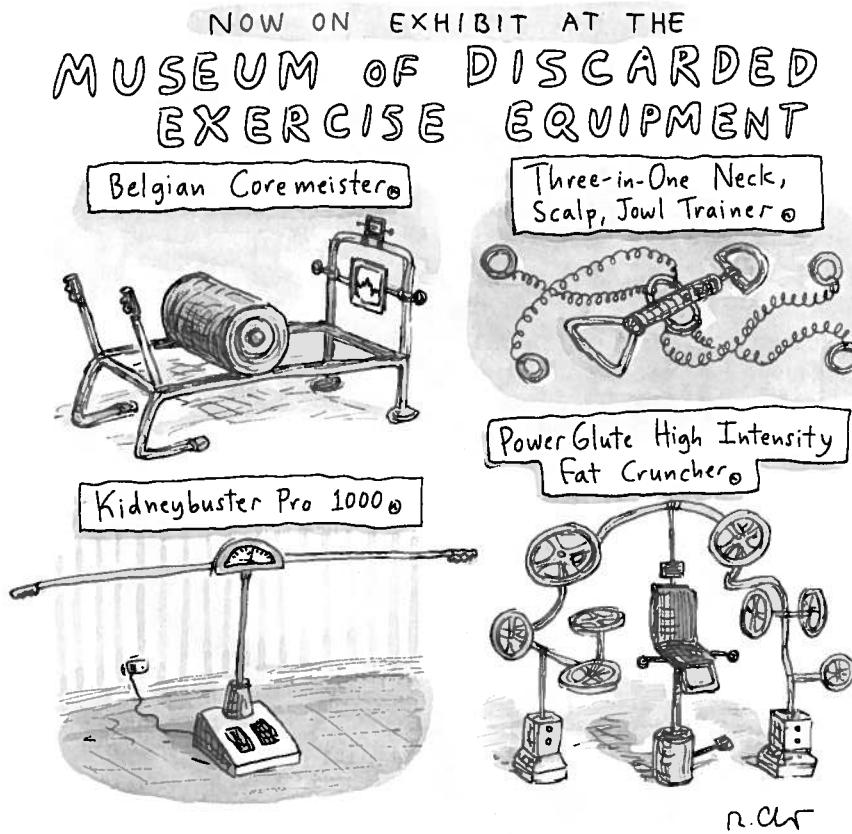
The modern era in child protection began with the rediscovery of child abuse, in July, 1962, when the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a paper called "The Battered-Child Syndrome." The paper's lead writer was a pediatrician

named C. Henry Kempe. Kempe reported on what he characterized as an invisible epidemic. Only with X-ray evidence could doctors be convinced that the injuries seen in very young children—most of those affected were younger than three—were caused by beatings. Kempe wrote, "The bones tell a story the child is too young or too frightened to tell."

In 1962, some ten thousand reports of child abuse were filed nationally. Between 1963 and 1967, all fifty states passed child-abuse-reporting laws. By 1976, the number of reports had risen to 669,000; in 1980, it was 1,154,000; it's currently about three million. The staggering effect of Kempe's article raises a question: Why, for all the attention paid to preventing cruelty to children during the Victorian and the Progressive eras, did interest fall off so dramatically between 1920 and 1962? There's no reason to believe that the mistreatment of children declined during those years. And X-ray evidence of the beating of children had been reported by a radiologist named John Caffey in 1946, in a somewhat oblique journal article called "Multiple Fractures in Long Bones of Infants," and more squarely, by other researchers, in 1955. What was new, in 1962, was the extent and nature of the press coverage. Kempe's article was picked up by *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Between 1950 and 1980, the historian Barbara Nelson has reported, child abuse was the subject of more than six hundred articles in the *Times* alone.

Why was the press so interested in child abuse after 1962? One reason is that the unseen catastrophe was a mainstay of the early-sixties exposé. A month before "The Battered-Child Syndrome" appeared, *The New Yorker* serialized Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring." Seven months later, the magazine published "Our Invisible Poor," by Dwight Macdonald. Carson ushered in the modern environmental movement; Macdonald is credited with helping to launch the War on Poverty. And Kempe launched the campaign against child abuse.

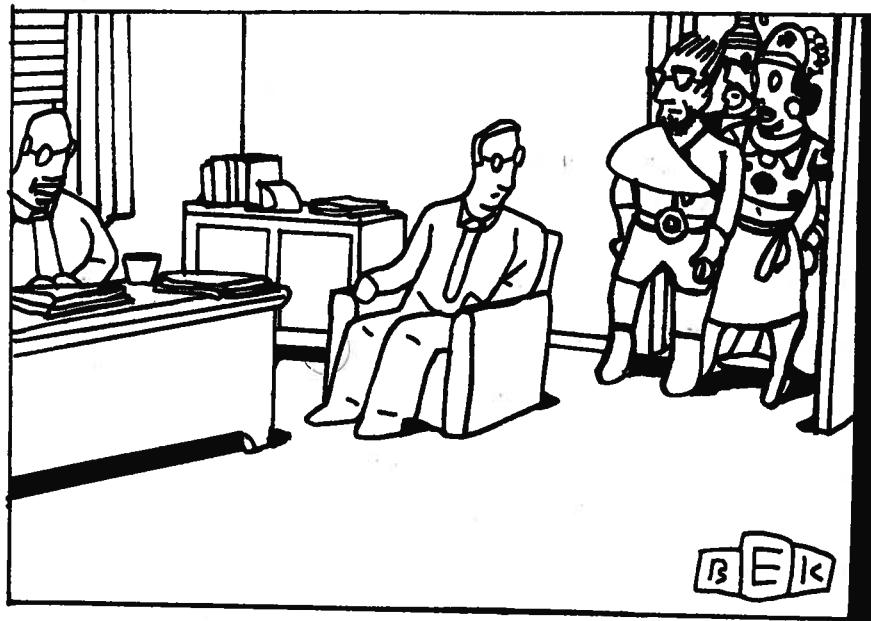
Still, that doesn't quite explain the relative lack of interest in child abuse in the twenties, thirties, forties, or fifties. This is nicely addressed by Macdonald. "There is a monotony about the injustices suffered by the poor that perhaps accounts for the lack of interest the rest of society shows in them," he wrote. "Everything seems



to go wrong with them. They never win. It's just boring." Generally, what has made the particular misery of babies and young children less boring is the attention paid to it by female political writers. Public attention to the welfare of poor children, the historian Linda Gordon has argued, coincides with eras in which women have had a strong political voice. It was therefore high when women were most actively fighting for the right to vote (from 1870 to 1920) and during the women's-liberation movement (from 1961 to 1975).

Interest in the welfare of children in the sixties was also part of that decade's ambition to end poverty. But the triumph of the report-abuse model marked the abandonment of that ambition. The turn came in the early nineteen-seventies. In 1971, Congress considered the Comprehensive Child Development Act, a last piece of Great Society legislation, an entitlement program providing for universal preschool education (referred to, during congressional debate, as "developmental day care"), with tuition scaled to a family's ability to pay. The bill's lead sponsor was Walter Mondale, a senator with Presidential aspirations who was the chair of the Subcommittee on Children and Youth and who had drafted childcare legislation as early as 1961. Supporters of the Child Development Act cast childcare as a civil-rights measure. Not since the 1964 Civil Rights Act had a bill been subject to more intense lobbying. The bipartisan vote in the Senate was an overwhelming 63–17; the victory in the House was razor-thin, 186–183. In December, 1971, Nixon, who was running for reelection on the back of a strategy that involved an appeal to conservatives, vetoed the bill. Pat Buchanan drafted Nixon's veto message, in which Nixon said that "for the Federal Government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing."

Conservatives argue that Great Society anti-poverty programs created a "culture of dependency." It's undeniably true that the War on Poverty has been a failure. But the abandonment of a federal childcare program made the independence of poor women impossible. What liberals sought, in its place, has proved disastrous. Mondale called Nixon's veto message "cruel, hysterical, and



"This is our design team and their over-the-top looks."

false." He then made a fateful decision: he crafted a piece of legislation that the White House would be unable to veto. "Not even Richard Nixon is in favor of child abuse!" Mondale said. Nixon had defended his veto of the childcare legislation on the ground that it had not been subject to sufficient debate or hearing. Mondale was determined that the same would not be said of the child-abuse legislation. In 1973, his subcommittee convened four days of public hearings in three cities. The lesson Mondale learned from Nixon's veto was that the care of children had to be distanced from the care of the poor. Mondale insisted, again and again—and against all evidence—that child abuse has nothing to do with poverty. "This is not a poverty problem," he said. "This is a national problem."

Out of those hearings came the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, signed by Nixon in January, 1974. Caring for children came to mean emergency intervention, to stop them from being murdered—Victorian infant life protection, revisited—notwithstanding the glaring fact that federally funded child-protective services that handle three million reports of child abuse every year represent a far, far more intrusive form of state authority over family life than federally subsidized childcare could ever have constituted. Meanwhile, the idea

that the government might have a different kind of obligation to poor mothers and their children slowly faded away.

On April 29, 1974, eighteen-year-old Denise Sousa was discharged from the care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She was two weeks pregnant. She eventually married the baby's father, Edward Gallison. After her son Eddie was born, premature, at twenty-nine weeks, in November, 1974, she told a nurse that she wanted to kill him.

In the mid-seventies, the soaring number of reports of child abuse and the new federal legislation meant that state Departments of Public Welfare needed more social workers. Most states, weakened by the recession, had scant funds to train new social workers, little money to pay them, and not the least inclination to value them. Toll-booth workers earned more.

In 1974, the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare was reorganized, and long-standing employees, after passing an exam weighted for seniority, were offered the opportunity to move into social work with little consideration of their experience. "You didn't need a college degree until 1980," Eleanor Dowd explained. Dowd helped work on the state's report about the Gallison case. (She's the acting head of a private agency, Cambridge Family and Children's Service, which was

founded in 1873.) Like Mossaides, she felt confident, when she started out in 1968, that childhood poverty was about to be eradicated. By the time of the Gallison investigation, a great deal had changed. "We learned a lot from the War on Poverty that we never used," Dowd says. "We took a wrong turn somewhere."

By March of 1975, Denise Gallison was pregnant again. A case record was kept by visiting nurses and workers from Catholic Charities. One of them arranged for her to have an abortion. On the day the abortion was scheduled, a worker wrote in the case record, "EXTREMELY HOSTILE, BELLIGERENT AND THREATENING—states no one understands her—no longer wants abortion."

Jennifer Gallison was born on September 13, 1975. Ten days later, a nurse visited the Gallisons' apartment and found that the baby and her ten-month-old brother, Eddie, "were without diapers and were wrapped in rags." Eddie weighed only ten pounds, could not sit up, and had no hair on the back of his head, apparently because he had so seldom been lifted out of his crib. In October, 1975, Catholic Charities filed a petition to remove the children from their parents' custody. (Only a court has this authority.) The judge refused to grant the petition, but Denise Gallison then called the Department of Public Welfare and asked that the children be taken away from her. "I couldn't take the pressure," she later said. "Plus, I was on speed." The babies were placed in different foster homes. The department conducted an intake study: "Treatment for mother has been recommended. This appears to be essential if any serious plans for reuniting this family are contemplated."

In April, 1976, a social worker named Carolyn Punch was assigned to the Gallison case. Punch had started at the department in 1951, as a typist. She had no social-work experience or training, but during the 1974 departmental reorganization she was promoted to clinical social worker, based on her seniority. Her supervisor started working at the agency in 1945, as a stenographer. She had no social-work experience, either: her training, when she switched from stenography to social work, in 1974, consisted of watching a film.

"There is no reason why her children should not be reunited with their par-

.50-CAL. GUNNER

1.

All day I aim at date palms.

The hood's covered
with dried stains: dip, coffee

I've spit. Dalton always yelling from the hole,
Not on my truck, dick.

Dust, here.

Dust there.
How many duds don't blow,

I don't know. Inside the Kevlar another song
stuck. Even over

the constant mosque music.

I'm into having sex.
Not into making love. (But I'm not

having. Not making ...
Dalton says it's my anthem.)

2.

My wish: to make Devices

Exploded

Improvised.

I keep both thumbs on the butterfly.

ents," Punch wrote in Denise Gallison's case record in October, 1976. Since the children had been taken from their care, more than a year before, Denise and Edward Gallison had almost invariably failed to turn up for their appointments to visit them. Punch recommended weekend, overnight visits. Catherine Holbrook, Eddie's foster mother, who was keen to adopt him, reported that after one such visit Eddie had to be hospitalized. At a hearing on October 31, 1977, Punch recommended that the children be returned to their parents. (At no hearing did the children have a legal representative.) The court ordered the children returned, with the stipulation

that the family be followed closely. No one in the Department of Public Welfare ever saw Jennifer Gallison again. The blizzard came in February. In an assessment filed on April 28, 1978, an assistant director reported that Denise Gallison's daughter weighed twenty-nine pounds: "Mother describes her as getting tall and slender 'like her father.'" By then, Jennifer Gallison had been dead for two and a half months.

The break in the Baby Doe case came in September, 2015, when a man named Michael Sprinsky told his sister that he believed he knew the girl in the photograph, and his sister told

This camouflage keeps
my vitals very much part
of the sand I stare down all day. Lt. says,
The Fifty should make people unhappy.
At home, they don't know all I do
is aim at date palms.

3.

Been hit with a few shells.
But I don't walk with a limp. (But mostly
we drive. Mostly,
we drive ...

And I aim at date palms.)

I saw what it said
in all that fine print

below Mission

Accomplished: accomplished,
of course, but please send

four thousand (plus)
body bags.

Bring them back, please.
No empties.

—Hugh Martin

the police. Sprinsky knew a woman from Dorchester named Rachelle Bond, who had a baby named Bella. When Bella disappeared, Bond had at first told Sprinsky that her baby had been taken away by the D.C.F. but later admitted that the baby was dead: she said that her boyfriend, Michael McCarthy, had killed her. Bond and McCarthy were arrested.

McCarthy told the police that he had no idea what happened to Bella Bond and that he believed she'd been taken into custody by the D.C.F. Bond told a different story. She said that, after she asked McCarthy to quiet the baby, he killed her by punching her in her

stomach. She said that he told her he'd kill her if she reported her daughter's death and that McCarthy put the body in a trash bag and shoved it into the refrigerator. Bond also told the police that she and McCarthy then drove to his father's plumbing business, where they got weights, which they put into a duffel bag, along with the trash bag, and dropped it into the harbor from a cruise-ship terminal in South Boston; the tide carried the trash bag to Deer Island.

Bond had used heroin just a few days before her arrest. During her arraignment, at Dorchester Municipal Court, in September, Bond, wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt, looked distant, confused, and

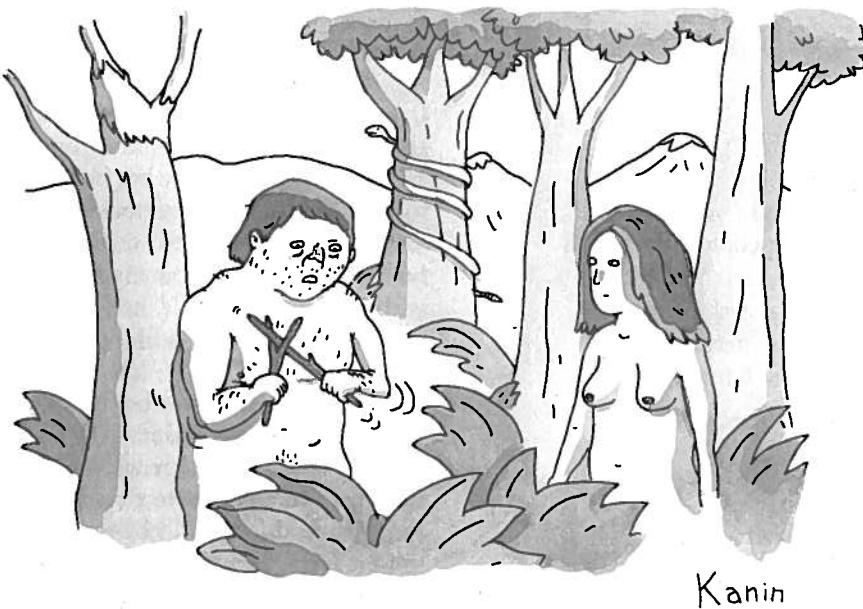
dissociative. "I hope you rot in hell!" a woman screamed during the proceedings. Also at the arraignment was the baby's father, Joseph Amoroso. Amoroso, thirty-two, has a long criminal record. He knew about the baby but had never met her. "I hold D.C.F. responsible for a lot of this," he told reporters on the courthouse steps. In an on-camera interview with the *Boston Herald*, he said, "My poor little angel Bella's life was taken from her by a monster!"

On Facebook, people began calling Rachelle Bond a "momster." The Governor held a press conference, pledging to transform child protection. Unfortunately, nothing could be worse for the prospects of reform than a high-profile trial.

On May 12, 1978, Carolyn Punch knocked on the door of the Gallisons' apartment building. Denise Gallison said that the children weren't at home, but Punch could hear a child crying upstairs. Punch returned with two Somerville police officers. Jennifer was nowhere to be found, but Eddie, three, was alone, strapped into a chair. His face had been so badly beaten that he no longer had an upper lip. Denise Gallison later said that Eddie had asked about his sister. "Where's Jenny?" he kept asking . . . and I couldn't take it, so I just started beating him." A doctor at Somerville Hospital said that, aside from having been burned with cigarettes, the boy's buttocks had been flayed so repeatedly that they were "like leather." It was a month before he was well enough to leave the hospital. Denise Gallison told the police that her husband had put her daughter in a trash bag. The police suspected that the bag had been picked up with the rest of the city's trash and dumped into a furnace that supplied steam for a General Electric plant.

Denise and Edward Gallison were arrested and charged with assault and manslaughter. Denise Gallison was pregnant with her third child.

On May 22nd, the Massachusetts legislature opened hearings into the Department of Public Welfare's handling of the Gallison case. "I lay the blame for the death of Jennifer Gallison directly on the Dukakis administration's policy, since 1975, that human services



"Genius is ten per cent inspiration, ninety per cent being the first person on earth."

are expendable in a time of fiscal crisis," the chairman of the Senate's Human Services Committee said. The problem, Barney Frank pointed out, was that "the beneficiaries of this money—the children—don't vote." Dukakis had been a comfort during the blizzard, but he was heartbroken during the Gallison disaster. It would take "the wisdom of Solomon" to know what to do about the thousands of reports of abuse the state received each year, he said: "Whether the state should take a child away from his parents is an extremely difficult and very lonely decision."

Dukakis's administration appointed a fact-finding committee to investigate. Its report revealed that no one at the Department of Public Welfare had ever looked up Denise Gallison's own case file. In 1978 and 1979, Denise and Edward Gallison were convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to prison. The fact-finding committee recommended the establishment of "a separate, adequately funded, adequately staffed Department of Social Services."

"The first commissioner of the new department, child psychologist Mary Jane England, is a realist in this regard," the Boston *Globe* reported in the summer of 1980. "Children will continue to die," she said recently, bluntly ad-

dressing the major challenge and the most desperate problem facing the new department. "What we want to do is reduce the chances of that happening."

That hasn't come to pass. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of infants murdered, per hundred thousand infants in the population, rose from 5.8 to 9.1. Other measures are even more troubling. Today, the United States has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of any nation in the developed world. Then, there is the matter of the criminal-justice system. A study conducted last year by Citizens for Juvenile Justice found that seventy-two per cent of youths in the Massachusetts juvenile-justice system had been involved with the D.C.F.; fifty-seven per cent of boys and fifty-nine per cent of girls had their first involvement before the age of five; more than forty per cent had their first involvement before the age of three. The children in both systems are disproportionately nonwhite. The problem isn't only that the kinds of family that attract D.C.F. involvement tend to raise children who might later have trouble with the law; it's that D.C.F. involvement itself "can increase the likelihood of future delinquent activity." The system has contributed to the establishment of a juvenile version

of the carceral state, a birth-to-prison pipeline. It is outrageously expensive, devastatingly ineffective, and profoundly unjust.

Rachelle Bond was born in 1975; she's exactly the age Jennifer Gallison would be if she were still alive. She grew up in Acton and Fitchburg, with her mother; she never knew her father. Bond and her only sibling, a sister, Tamera Bond, say that they were both beaten and sexually abused as children. Rachelle Bond's first run-in with the law was in 1994, when she was eighteen. She has been incarcerated no fewer than twelve times since, including for prostitution, and has a long history of drug use. She had her first child in 2000, and another soon after. Following reports of neglect, the D.C.F. removed both children from her care, and the state eventually terminated her parental rights. She was arrested again in 2008 and released to a residential program. She has been the recipient of a great many social services, after-the-fact interventions.

She got pregnant at the end of 2011, while living in a tent in Occupy Boston. She spent much of her pregnancy in prison. Bella Bond was born in August, 2012, when her mother was living in a homeless shelter. Reports that Bond was neglecting the baby led to D.C.F. involvement for the first five months of Bella's life, and then again in June, 2013, when Bella was ten months old. The D.C.F. closed the case in September, 2013. (Instead of conducting a new assessment, caseworkers at the D.C.F. had copied into Rachelle Bond's file information from an assessment conducted in 2006.) The next month, Rachelle Bond left the homeless shelter and moved into a subsidized apartment.

After her arrest last fall, reporters and a torch-bearing public trawled the Internet for information about her. She'd had a Facebook page. She'd posted dozens of pictures of Bella, and videos, too. Bella in pigtails and purple footie pajamas, Bella in a topknot and bluejeans, Bella with a Dora the Explorer puzzle, Bella at her Hello Kitty-themed birthday, the day she turned two. People began bringing to Deer Island new toys, Hello Kittys, and new notes: "We will *never* forget you, Bella."

Bond's attorney is Janice Bassil, who has been involved in many of Boston's most high-profile trials. She helped defend John Salvi, who, in 1994, killed two women at a Planned Parenthood clinic. In September, she got a call from the state asking her if she'd be willing to represent either McCarthy or Bond. "They said, 'Who do you want?' And I said, 'I'll take the woman,'" Bassil said.

A few years ago, Bassil successfully defended a woman who had murdered her two children. She used an insanity defense, which very seldom works. "My goal was to tell her whole life story so the jury would have some empathy," Bassil told me. Her approach to Bond's defense is likely to be both the same and different. She'll tell her whole life story, emphasizing the eight years she spent living on the streets. "She lived under a bridge," Bassil told me. "You live under a bridge and tell me how well you'd cope." Under the circumstances, she'll probably say, Bond was the best mother she could have been. Bassil might talk, too, about the history of the provision of services to poor mothers and poor children. "When I started as a Massachusetts public defender, in 1978, the year of Gallison, the entire front row in court was filled with people from programs who were there to step up and say, 'Judge, we can offer a bed or clinical services.' And then that disappeared. By the mid-nineteen-eighties, that was gone." Denise Gallison's attorneys tried, and failed, to have details from Gallison's own childhood entered as evidence, but "the law has opened up there," Bassil says. "Battered-women's syndrome didn't exist when Denise Gallison was being tried." I asked Bassil if the public's embrace of Bella Bond would make defending her client more difficult. Bassil shook her head. "The reason there are those pictures and videos," she said, her voice steadily rising, as if she were addressing the jury, "is because her mother took them because her mother loved her."

In October, when Bond and McCarthy appeared in Dorchester Municipal Court, television trucks parked outside the courthouse raised their antennae until they towered over the American flag fluttering from a pole on the courthouse lawn. Inside, Bond shuffled into

the dock, sheltered behind glass. She hid her face with her hair. (In prison, inmates shout "Baby killer!" whenever she leaves her cell.) Bassil asked for a second autopsy; the assistant district attorney didn't object; the judge granted the request; court adjourned. The bailiff cried, "God save the Commonwealth."

A grand jury was called. All fall, it met to weigh evidence: text messages, cell-phone records, DNA. On November 17th, while the grand jury deliberated in secret, Governor Baker held a press conference at the State House. "There's nothing more important than the safety and security of our kids," he said, echoing Dukakis, announcing a new set of D.C.F. policies. Three days later, the Office of the Child Advocate released its final report, urging a slate of reforms. "Support cannot just come during crises," Mossaides's office warned.

There's no doubt that the proposed reforms are well intended. And there is little doubt that they will fail.

Linda Spears grew up in Rhode Island; her father, a Narragansett Indian, was an engineer; her mother was a child-protection worker. Spears got her first job in 1979, when states all over the country were reshaping social services to manage the skyrocketing number of reports of child abuse. "My first day, I walked into my office, in a basement, and there was a box of cases on my desk. I did my first removal on day three," Spears told me when we met at her office. In the nineteen-eighties, she grew interested in policy. "It struck me that the problems that workers face on the front line could not be solved on the front line," she says. In 1992, she went to Washington, to work for the Child Welfare League, where she performed assessments on local and state agencies and saw a lot of reforms put into place. The problem, she says, is that they never hold for long; they're undermined by budget cuts.

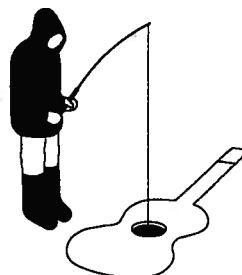
Spears believes that responsibility for the scandal-reform cycle lies not only with the press and with legislators but with the child-protection movement itself. "Historically, we sounded only alarms," she says. "Every message was

'It's horrible! It's horrible! It's worse than ever!' So now all we hear are different alarms: 'The system doesn't work! Poor families are broken families!'"

The newest regime in child protection is the quantitative analysis of risk. "We have risk-assessment tools that we've never had before," Spears says. (One of the first changes she made was to expand a program to distribute twenty-four hundred iPads to field workers.) "At the end of the day, you're talking about, one, trying to predict human behavior and, two, matching resources to those predictions," Spears says. "Some families, where there's an alcoholic parent, the family is less than perfect, but the kids are O.K., they're really O.K. Another family with the same kind of parent, and less than perfect, and no one is functioning."

The murky science of risk assessment relies on attempts to quantify "trauma" and "adversity," which, on the one hand, are meaningful clinical concepts but, on the other hand, are proxy terms for poverty. (And, worryingly, the study of trauma has both a dubious intellectual history and an abysmal track record, not least because of its role in the sexual-abuse scandals of the eighties and the recovered-memory travesty of the nineties.) Vincent Felitti, the longtime head of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Kaiser Permanente, in California, is one of the principal investigators in a body of work on adverse childhood experiences, or ACE. The ACE study is a collaboration of Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control. In 1985, Felitti launched a weight-loss program for patients at Kaiser Permanente and developed a theory that obesity in adulthood was an indicator of abuse in childhood.

Felitti and Robert Anda, of the C.D.C., then designed a study to trace the influence of childhood experiences on adult illness and death. After completing questionnaires about their childhoods, more than seventeen thousand Kaiser Permanente patients were assigned an "ACE score," from zero to ten, a tally of the kinds of adversity experienced before the age of eighteen. The ten adverse childhood experiences are emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect;



violence, alcoholism and drug abuse, incarceration, or mental illness within the family; and having been raised by anyone other than two biological parents. The study is ongoing, but early reports assert that ACE scores are predictive. For instance, "compared to persons with an ACE score of 0, those with an ACE score of 4 or more were twice as likely to be smokers, 12 times more likely to have attempted suicide, 7 times more likely to be alcoholic, and 10 times more likely to have injected street drugs."

The noble dream here is that, if only child-protective agencies collected better data and used better algorithms, children would no longer be beaten or killed. Meanwhile, there is good reason to worry that the ACE score is the new I.Q., a deterministic label that is being used to sort children into those who can be helped and those who can't. And, for all the knowledge gained, the medicalization of misery is yet another way to avoid talking about impoverishment, destitution, and inequality. "Adverse outcomes?" Spears asks. "Adverse outcomes are what happen to poor kids."

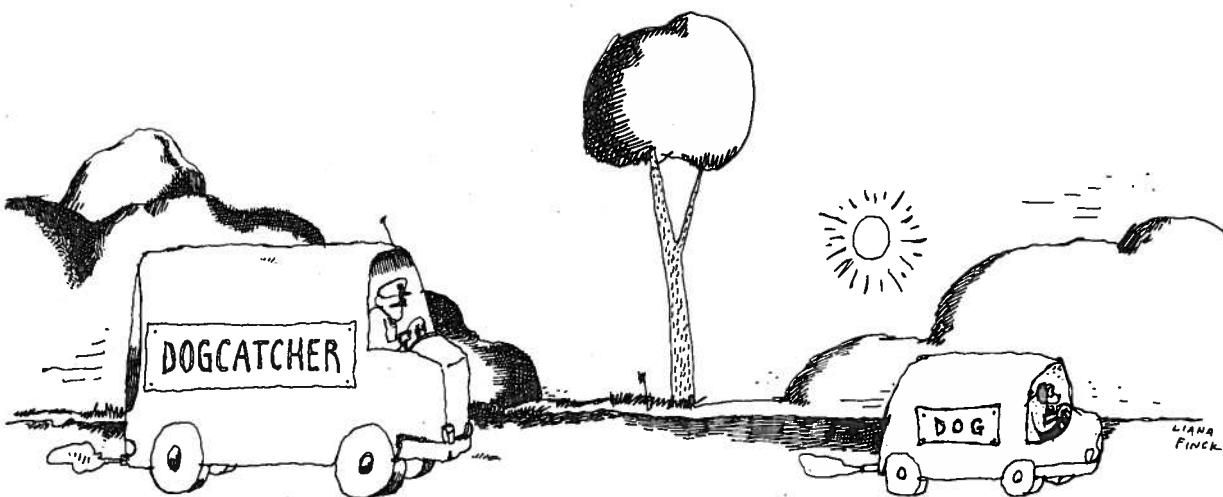
The tragedy of the child-welfare system lies, unnoticed, at the bottom of the chasm that divides American politics. On the right, in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade*, Victorian child-saving was reborn as the pro-life movement, complete with the dead-baby exposé, right down to last year's Planned Parenthood videos of "baby parts": its concern with the lives of children begins with conception but ends with birth. On the left, feminists have

generally aligned with the report-abuse regime, rather than serving as critics of it: when battered-woman syndrome followed battered-child syndrome, the recovery of trauma became feminist dogma. During the decades in which the right and the left battled over abortion, a whole raft of programs designed to prevent the neglect of young children were being dismantled. "In 1980, with the remnants of the poverty programs, you had some locally based or even neighborhood-based programs still in place," Dowd says. Little of that exists anymore, and programs aimed at prevention have proved impossible to rebuild. "Agencies have tried and tried to get closer to a prevention model, but it's just not how the field is set up," Spears told me. In the rare instances when states establish prevention programs, she says, they can't sustain them: "When budget cuts come, you can cut prevention but you can't cut intervention." Presumably, preventing abuse and neglect by providing family-support services would reduce the numbers of children in the juvenile-justice system and in the adult-justice system, too. "If you could do it, the savings would be enormous," Spears says.

Could you do it? A glimpse of what might have been, if the child-welfare path chosen in the nineteen-seventies had been anti-poverty instead of anti-abuse, and based in prevention instead of intervention, is a program called Minding the Baby, run jointly by the Yale Child Study Center and Yale's School of Nursing. Founded in 2001 by Arietta Slade, a clinical psychologist, Lois Sadler, a pediatric nurse prac-

titioner, and Linda Mayes, a professor of epidemiology, pediatrics, and psychology, the program offers services to poor, first-time mothers between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. The mothers, who are identified by community health centers, volunteer to participate. From pregnancy through the child's second birthday, a pediatric nurse practitioner and a clinical social worker take turns making frequent home visits. They provide health care, promote development, and support mental health, taking on, to some degree, the role of a kind of grandmother, teaching young mothers how to understand what their babies are saying to them by being curious, and reading cues. This approach is known as reflective parenting. "Minding the baby" is meant to evoke a whole set of skills: how to mind your baby, how to keep your baby in mind, and how to know your baby's mind. A mother tries to nurse her baby; the baby turns his head away; the mother feels rejected, and angry. The nurse might say, "I wonder why he's doing that?" And then she might help the mother puzzle out what the baby might be feeling or thinking. She might suggest, "Sometimes a baby turns away when he needs a rest. Sometimes moms need a rest, too!"

Tanika Simpson is Minding the Baby's clinical social worker. "We are practicing this model in a way that's different from how we've been trained," she told me. She sometimes works with Connecticut's D.C.F. "From a policy perspective, people want something that's quick and clean, to assess risk. But this is messy. And it's never going to be quick and clean. I've worked with D.C.F.



workers. They want to work differently. I'm not sure that their infrastructure supports them to work differently." Before Minding the Baby, Simpson worked with young children. She says, "Parents would bring in their three-year-olds and they'd already given up on them." Many of the young mothers who are served by Minding the Baby have had experience with child-protection services as children, and they've got good reason to be anxious about visiting social workers. Simpson says that by the time one of her clients' babies is born she's been visiting with that client for months. Her first meeting with the baby is in the hospital, soon after the child's birth. "It never fails to move me that we will go into that hospital room, and she will hand us her baby," Simpson says, a catch in her voice. "The trust there, it blows me away, every time."

"We don't see things quite the way the Department of Children and Families sees them," Arietta Slade told me. "Our approach is different. From many, many perspectives, the relationship between the mother and child and between the father and child is where change resides. That's where the potential is; it's where the growth can be. It's also where the devastation can be. But it's really where you can work."

Minding the Baby has completed studies of the mothers and babies who received care between 2002 and 2014, as compared with control groups. Results include higher rates of on-time pediatric immunization, stronger mother-child bonds, longer spacing between child-births, and lower rates of child-protection referrals. Support for the studies was provided by grants from the National Institutes of Health and from a number of foundations. Much of that money supports research; it does not—and was never intended to—support the provision of services. In one of the sadder ironies in a field desperately in need of hope, with the clinical trials completed, and the value of prevention demonstrated, sources of funding for programs based on that model are few and far between.

But child welfare isn't driven by studies like the studies conducted by the Minding the Baby program. Child welfare is driven by stories like the death of Baby Doe. A story less



PAUL
NORTH

"The corn hasn't quite matured if it's still reading Ayn Rand."

likely to lead to public support for better programs for poor mothers is difficult to imagine.

In the first week of January, Rachelle Bond was arraigned in Suffolk Superior Court, in downtown Boston. She was wearing that same gray hooded sweatshirt, and still hiding behind her hair. Cameras clicked; reporters live-tweeted; Bond wept. Bassil placed an arm around her. The grand jury had issued indictments charging McCarthy with murder, and Bond as an accessory after the fact. David Deakin, the assistant district attorney prosecuting the case, asked for bail to be set at a million dollars, cash. Bassil suggested that the amount was ridiculous—"Any bail would hold her"—but she didn't contest it. Deakin summarized the case, at length. In Bond's apartment, "a cadaver-trained dog alerted to the hinge area of the refrigerator." In the harbor, divers found the duffel bag and the weights. He recounted Bond's criminal history. Bassil tried to object, suggesting that, since she hadn't contested the bail, there was no need to rehearse these details and that Deakin's perfor-

mance was purely for the cameras. Bond faces another charge, too, for larceny, and Deakin lingered over it. It alleges that Bond collected just under fourteen hundred dollars in charity and government assistance intended for her daughter, long after her daughter was dead.

Both Bond and McCarthy are pleading not guilty. Pretrial hearings begin later this month. During the grand-jury proceedings, prosecutors entered as evidence a letter Bond received from the Boston Globe Santa Holiday Fund. Baby killer steals from Claus? More and worse details will come out. But Bond might not face trial; it's likely that she'll testify against McCarthy, possibly in exchange for a reduced sentence. For child welfare, there will be no mercy.

Two days after Thanksgiving, Rachelle Bond's daughter was buried in Winthrop Cemetery. Baby Doe has got a name. Poverty remains unspeakable. By New Year's Day, snow had blanketed her grave. So far, the winter has been mild, but harsher conditions are predicted. A blizzard is on the way. ♦