

## **Important Notice**

by Jane Rzepka ([A Small Heaven](#), Skinner House, 1989)

The newsletter editor of the First Parish in Wayland, Massachusetts, once shared this New Yorker squib:

“IMPORTANT NOTICE. If you are one of the hundreds of parachuting enthusiasts who recently bought our Easy Sky diving book, please make the following correction: On page eight, line seven, the words ‘state zip code’ should have read ‘pull rip cord.’”

I worry about things like this during the holiday season. Had I been a parachuting enthusiast, and had I breezed through Easy Sky Diving during the month of December, I’d still be flying through the air, picking up speed, shouting my zip code.

Zip codes aren’t important. Rip cords are. At this time of the year, it’s all too easy to confuse one for the other. The “zip codes” of the season— the replacement bulbs, the four sticks of butter, the fruit-by-mail catalogs, and the party shoes— have our attention, and before we know it we’re picking up speed and shouting out those zip codes without ever asking why.

Perhaps we should look to our rip cords. Our lifelines, in December as always, are our inner quiet, the love we exchange, and our efforts to make the world more whole. We can slow the descent. We can take in the view. And we can anticipate a gentle landing on the twenty-fifth.