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Daddy

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Daddy

I.
and Mom called them Quickies.
and each night I gave Dad one,
a kiss and hug.
not on the mouth
or bear hugs where our bellies touched,
but side hugs and quick pecks on the cheek,
sometimes in his ear.
i remember how the thorns in Dad’s beard
pricked my 7 year old skin,
branding my lips with a frown.
He has never said I love you
and I don’t think he knows how.

II.
i remember how Dad whipped out
the leather belt from his pant loops
and how the floor boards rattled
in his search for me.
and as I hid in my toy box,
that square wooden coffin,
i prayed not to see daylight,
but to be saved.
and how I stared at the cold potatoes on my plate
and pondered what Ethiopians were.
and the number games I made up
at that kitchen table,
counting the red, black and white squares
on the linoleum floor
until I was excused.
Does he know we have the same hands and skin?

III.
and now I’m 16
and know right from wrong.
i make up for the lost memories of us
playing on the castle slide
in the magic park on Tawas Bay.
or the time my little hands
and his large hands planted marigolds.
I don’t ever remember calling him Daddy.
and now that I know what chemistry is
and appreciate bird watching and rocks,
things he likes,
i lean against his soft body.
his belly rumbles beneath the
white undershirt
and I imagine snowflakes
are swirling inside.
I do not need snapshots to remind me
I’m living in the good times.

Annmarie Borucki