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UPTOWN TROLLEY Alberto Gutierrez

2:25

Hannah Smith

When we first saw dad again after four years,
his brown hair was as short as when we last saw him,
but not buzzed like it was when he was in prison.
Softly grayed with a mixture of grief and age,

In his glove compartment
The remnants of a recently chopped off ponytail
Show and Tell that his hair had gotten long after prison
the yellow-blond of it spoke hard work in the sun.

It was long like that when I was born,
and when my brother was born eighteen months later.
Long like when my sister was learning to speak.
Back when we lived in the country and he would hitchhike to work.

He looked healthy.
The man on his felon card had not looked like my father.
His face had become so gaunt.

He said his children died the day we left him.
It took many years after this first reconciliation for him to get peace in this matter
and for us to understand what he had meant.

At first I'm sure that all he could remember was his six-year-old baby girl, daddy's girl,
screaming, crying, in the back of grandfather's car,
because she couldn't understand why she was being taken from him.
My nine-year-old brother's close-fisted fury,
and my pre-teen embittered stoicism.

Our common memories had grown stale,
he knew—
with this heavy sadness in his blue eyes that no one but God could've understood.
You could see that he was trying to resume a moment that had never known the luxury of pausing.

And yet the common cord had not been snapped.

The man who had taken us everywhere,
The light and the dark,
the daddy who was faster and stronger than any of the other daddies,
had been with Grace restored.

And I found that it was I then who needed Grace to love him again.

I never thanked my brother for initiating,
that first step toward years restored,
made possible by foreyear locust eaten.