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For My Father

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One night in the dark,
with streetlight sunshine
you asked about the
illusory images of my mind.
My freedom of thought enveloped me,
in the streetlight that reflected off your glasses,
that hid ice blue eyes;
they are like my ice blue eyes.

I’d forgotten how I got here,
caught in spider web mistakes,
all legs just spinning,
forgotten you’d told me
trees cry.

Their skin is bark. Rough leather
I pick off beneath the maroon cocoon
that I wait to shed,
emerging oranges and blacks,
Don’t touch their wings.
Their magic will stick to oily fingertips.
It fluttered only to be caught in the polished coal
of a crow’s beak.
I watched beauty taken away,
fiery salmander I crushed under a sandaled foot,
your turtle that fell to similar fate beneath
Grandpa’s thick soled work boot.
I couldn’t make it live again and
you couldn’t make it live again.

I’d forgotten Lucky Strikes, bottled soda,
backyard jungles, green Tic-Tacs,
Godzilla, Mothra, the Smog-monster,
Kung-Fu movies with improvised soundtracks,
skunk skin on the neighbor’s back porch;
it’s visible through the gap left from ill-fitting plywood,
the burn on your arm from the film projector,
ticking, stuttering pictures, cigarette ashes.
(I’d tried to steal memories that weren’t mine.)

I remember withered apple witches;
their pencil bodies danced in my playground.
You used to chase me around the house
in chestnut dreams,
hide in beige corners in moccasins
and red plaid.
You painted my canvas of emerald city trees,
swimming skylines, and solid dreams.
Now I watch easy chair battles.

The colors fade to gray in winter.
You put on snowshoes,
and I with ski pole burdens
shout for you.

-Leslie Karla *