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Peter Imsdahl

PROMISES OF DILL SEED

My children will tell you I have not been a good father—
waking them at night to hear Mars screaming by,
once burning their fingers when I only meant to show them
how to hang a Monet.

What they'll remember to tell their children,
or at least the authorities, is about the day on the way home,
I stopped my bicycle, stopped to steal a wren from the bushes.
I'll say she was injured—to justify my covetous nature.
I half promised her dill seed. My children
will be merciless in their rendering of that day,
penalizing me with no Milton, or one hundred days
without windows.

But, for a good ten or twelve minutes,
there was pure beauty as I stood in our driveway,
bird having been nearly crushed from the sweaty, uphill
pedaling. Beauty in the bloody knee of the daughter
who tripped running to greet us. Beauty in their open mouths.
Beauty in the three piano movers next door as they carried
an upright across the lawn (a physics problem in a book
would years later use this picture). Beauty in the way
the fourth man, the one with the clipboard, pencil behind
his ear, trotted up to where the men bowed backward,
their chins tilted toward a warm sky, and played a menuet
by Händel that, in its fineness, started me crying,
started the trees crying. "Look, look!" I said,
pointing to the movers, the weeping trees,
but I may just as well have been Gregor the bug
trying to explain his strange condition, for the children
had already rounded the corner of the house,
one looking for a box, another for a jam lid and water.