

The Citron Review

When You're at Daddy's



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1 min ago

by *Elyse Giaimo*

Off goes the duck nightlight.

“Thanks,” I say, “but Eva’s with her father.”

His orange bill doesn’t quack a complaint. His wings don’t flap in protest. Ice cream sheets and stuffed friends go to shadow. The bright space is now much too dark, too quiet. That fowl, though, remains plastic and unflinching. Comforting in his calm dignity.

Porch planks creak. Keys tumble.

The upstairs neighbor girls squeal, “Mommy’s back from work!” Lonely, I sigh into couch pillows. I imagine a warm embrace, soft cheek, sticky fingers. For a minute, I’ve just gotten home too.

As I pass the new mirror, it evokes sweet mouth marks from a girl with tiara, wand, and tutu. My scuffed black heels were much too big. Wanting to be me, though, you said they fit just right, kissed your reflection. That was when we lived with Daddy. Our old mirror, that glass smudged by little lips, exists only in sentiment.

Reaching for my nail polish, I remember giving you a manicure: it’s like painting a pinky toe ten times. With tiny fingers spread to dry, you didn’t move. So serious. Too grown. I smiled, tickled underarms. The stillness mollified, thank goodness, by belly laughs.

On the mantle sits the school portrait, an astute rendering of twinkling eyes and glossy curls. Time for bedtime stories. You love when I read the final verse of Madeline. I use a quiet voice that wanes to a whisper, and gently knock my forehead into yours. Tonight I recite the lines to nobody.

The framed face, however vivid, looks cold and hard-edged.

Elyse Giaimo is a grant writer at a large social service agency in New York City. As a member of The Montclair Write Group, she has begun to experiment with more creative forms of writing. Elyse has been published in *SwimSwam*, *Hipolitics* and on the Catholic Charities New York blog.

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