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Made Ya Look!

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Robert J. De Smith

In an hour’s worth
Of backyard work
I must have heard it thirty times.

When recess begins
Across the green schoolyard,
And I feel children
Spilling out of doorways,

I swear I hear it:
“Dad!”

I look up every time.

It could be “Dad” that I hear—
I have a child in the school—
In fact, my wife could be
On recess duty at this instant.

Again I hear, “Dad!”

I scan the field:
I see soccer,
Tag, secrets,

But no one in distress,
Holding a shin,
Or waving and jumping
A full-bodied greeting
(I imagine my daughter, her braids bouncing).

“Dad!”

Are there that many
Kids named “Chad” or “Zach”?

Is everyone screaming they’re “mad”
Or “sad”—or “glad”?

Am I just hearing over and over
The midwestern
“Yeah!” as a basket
Is scored or a prank pulled?

But I can't shake
The low-grade alertness
The “æ” vowel
Sends down my neck.

Someone's calling me?

Okay, so they're all my kids:
It's a parent-run school,
My wife's a teacher.
I've taught its graduates
(Some my wife has taught, too).

My kids have spent all
Their grade school years there;
I've coached its players,
Seen its concerts,
Strolled through halls of its macaroni art.

But that's not enough—
They're calling me.
Okay, they're not, but it's how I feel.

Is this how we live?

Our hands on a shovel handle
Or pruner or wrench
With a tingle dropping
Down spines
Because someone needs us?