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Home

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Home

by Mike Vanden Bosch

Dad, if you marry Emma, I'll never come home again.

Your daughter, Nell

“Home. As if my home is still your home. As if
I have a home without my wife of forty years.
If I lost a leg, would you begrudge me a crutch?
What at twenty do you know of loneliness?
You want me preserved as the lover of your mother—
“faithful to her memory.” I want to be,
but I can't sip coffee with her memory,
can't hear “good morning” from a framed smile.
Alone I limp through my morning walks.
Alone on my pillow I kiss her memory
good night. Home—what's *home* alone?
You've sculpted me in stone to fit your room—
childhood father, your mother's other half.
But I am flesh and blood, not a torso on a bust
to preserve a grown child's lost mother-love.
I see your need to save for one more day
one rose of a dim past, but must I choose
to be flesh *or* father? Who made you queen
to hang me from my hocks high above new wife
or life until death heaves me home
for good where, you'll be glad to know,
I won't be married or given in marriage?”