

"Daddy, Can You Find the Cheerios?"

by Carl Santoro

I put down my coffee cup,
tightened my knot.

"Mom can't find it. The box."
"I know, honey. The cereal."

The kitchen was coming alive
with our morning routines.

"I'll look on the lower shelves,
while mom looks on the upper ones."

Angelina, with her one arm
holding her favorite doll,
whispered for me to come down closer.

"She's been taking too long, " she breathed into my ear.

I couldn't help but giggle some,
and figured I should
turn on the light.

The blue haze of early morning
now replaced with a warmer
orange glow
gave hope to the chore at hand.

Marie stretched further
to separate the boxes.

"I got them!" she exclaimed.

She held the box out to me.
For a moment we all held it.

I saw Marie's beautiful hands
suddenly appear older than
I was used to seeing. As though older than
yesterday by a few years.
A slight vein rippling
bulged atop the familiar smooth skin.
A flash into the future perhaps.
Surely, this was just the lighting.
Why, these were the young hands
that I kissed only last night.

I felt a lump in my throat.
A sadness of things to come.

"Daddy, let go!"

Angelina pulled my hand.
Startled, I let go staring
at Angelina's hands.
Hands alive for only six years.
Her chubby fingers, now slender
and strong instead.
Hands that I kissed only last night.

I felt that sadness of things to come.
I felt a gladness of things to come.

I picked up my cup.
Everyone was happy.

The knot needed loosening.

