

Plucked

by Foster Trecost

I walked to work back then, about twenty-five minutes through a city with few pleasant sights. One was a playground, but I passed at an empty hour, long before it held screams and scurries, before parents intent on merging a social slant began their morning chats. It reminded me of a science fiction film, one where everything remained but the people, like the children supposed to be playing had been plucked away.

I remember a day different than the others, different because I could hear something, a mother's voice. She stood by a swing, pushed it gently, laughed, called her son by name.

"You're a bird," she said. "You're free!"

I smiled at her enthusiasm, but it subsided, replaced with grief. The laughter from only seconds before had turned to cries.

Closer, the truth became clear: she pushed an empty swing, a lonesome mother left behind by a child who had been plucked away.

