

The Babies

by Gary Moshimer

We jam into the green tent as it begins to rain. His casket is covered with flowers and there is the picture you took of him, the day you climbed the fire tower from where you could see forever, past his smiling face the bars and a million changing leaves.

His pregnant girl picks a flower and hands it to you. She hugs you for a long minute and tries to smile. Her face has tiny cuts and she wears a neck brace, but somehow he is dead. They both went through the windshield, but she doesn't remember anything. I look down at her swollen feet. All of our shoes have bits of mud. The minister spoke of ashes and dust but not mud.

We move away from the tent, into the rain, and you smoke a cigarette. As your father, I never knew you smoked. You offer me one and I take it. I cough and cough, because I quit years ago. Instead of heading back to the church basement for snacks, you want to look at grave stones. We drift down the hill. The others move in the opposite direction. Some men come from hiding to start lowering him in.

We find the old black stones, barely legible. After some study we realize they are all babies. Our suits are new, acquired for this day, but we get down and curl on top of them.

