

Where Is Daddy?

by Jennifer Donnell

He checks the bedrooms first,
then the hallway,
followed by the living room
and the bathrooms.

When he can't find you he takes to calling out,
daddy,
daddy,
daddy.

I'm sure the neighbors hear.
He seems convinced that his frantic calls will make you appear like a
genie.

Daddy is at work, I finally lie, hoping to relieve his anxieties.
I flash forward to him at 20, telling a therapist that he fears the
people he loves
will just disappear.

Too young to understand what work is,
he knows it's somewhere adults go and looks relieved,
though confused. He scrunches his summer tanned nose,
his wispy blonde curls all but certified cherub, I brush them from his
forehead
and replace them with a kiss.

Isn't it great daddy is earning money for things we need, I enthuse.
He smiles, tentative, not fully convinced.
*When you're big you'll go to work and maybe you'll be a writer like
mommy
or an artist like sister,
and good at fixing things like daddy.*

He smiles wider and motions toward his play tools, talking a fusion of baby-toddler talk.

He picks up the screw driver just like you've showed him, then switches it out for the hammer.

Bang,

bang,

bang,

the hammering reverberates...

but it's easier to listen to than him crying for daddy.

