

Survival

I am the father of two daughters--
I am the epitome of the protective dad.
I realize, with shame,
that I was once the boy
that shouted lewd comments
at my sixth grader today,
when she was bent over,
just trying to drink water,
at the water fountain
of the eighth grade hallway. I am still
the man who wants to say, "don't drink
there,
again, honey."
But my daughter was just trying to drink,
something we all need to do
to survive.

She is my oldest.
She has just begun to enter the world
that I had a hand in perpetrating,
if not creating,
and I imagine her surviving the streets
without me
there holding her hand as she crosses,
without me,
a man, there to hold the stares
of other men in my hands.

I do not want to be the protective dad.
I do not want my daughters
to have to live in a world
where they are taught
that keys are more
than just a way to unlock your door,
where opening a bottle
requires ears to listen
for the seal breaking,
where three finger thickness
decides the quality of their education,
where our president has
allegedly

sexually assaulted
numerous women,
where we use allegation
as a synonym for truth
because truth has no meaning anymore.
I do not want my daughters to live in a
world
where men do not realize:
women are human
women are human
women are human
until they have a daughter.

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