



I Have My Father's Voice

by Chris van Wyk

When I walk into a room
where my father has just been
I fill the same spaces he did
from the elbows on the table
to the head thrown back 5
and when we laugh we aim the guffaw
at the same space in the air.
Before anybody has told me this I know
because I see myself through
my father's eyes. 10

When I was a pigeon-toed boy
my father used his voice
to send me to bed
to run and buy the newspaper
to scribble my way through matric. 15

He also used his voice for harsher things:
to bluster when we made a noise
when the kitchen wasn't cleaned after supper
when I was out too late.

Late for work, on many mornings, 20
one sock in hand, its twin
an angry glint in his eyes he flings
dirty clothes out of the washing box:
vests, jeans, pants and shirts shouting
anagrams of fee fo fi fum until he is up 25
to his knees in a stinking heap of laundry.

I have my father's voice too
and his fuming temper
and I shout as he does.
But I spew the words out 30
in pairs of alliteration
and an air of assonance.

Everything a poet needs
my father has bequeathed me
except the words. 35

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