

FALSE MEMORIES

by Justin Pineda-Pirro

There are days within days,
a time between them, maybe
six before seven
eleven before ten.
Grade school teachers
or sky-scraping women?
They send their dismissals
like lipstick kisses stamped
on a grandson's cheek.
The sun so bright, little toes race
from tree to tree, the shade
the finish line. Red birds
with mohawks send invites
atop chain link fences. Once there,
their invitations disintegrate,
take off and make planes
against the concrete, leaving
little hands to touch peeling scales
of metal. Grass perceived
through connected diamonds,
so green and yet so soft in the breeze.

A breeze not harsh like a gust
but with gentle, feathered fingers that guide
you forward. The clock escapes
each child's loose grip on the first try.
No fight, no hassle. A robust familiar finger
points to their little person,
plucking them from the crowd
like one final dandelion needed
to complete a nest.
That finger joins the rest
to smooth back messy brown hair, freeing
a small reflective forehead
just in time for a mother's beak to swoop in
and peck it. And at last,
a gentle whisper, "It's time to go home now."