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Runaway

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Runaway

Description

This prose poem describes the ways that I feel Norman Rockwell's painting "Runaway" symbolizes my relationship with my father.

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RUNAWAY

KATIE MILLIGAN

it hangs above the computer desk in my parents' bedroom,

where it's hung for as long as i can remember and it's always fascinated me, probably because my father is a police officer, probably because the police officer in the painting looks just like my father: tall, burly, dark hair and too big for the green leather-wrapped bar stools of the diner, where a little boy sits next to him, wearing a yellow t-shirt, and beneath him there is a red handkerchief tied to a stick (you know, that stereotypical trademark of a kid running away) and i always loved that the special listed on the chalkboard was spaghetti and meatballs (because it was my favorite food; my father taught me to swirl the fork just so, to add cottage cheese to your marinara sauce, and once we made up this song to the tune of "dreidel" but with "noodle") but anyways there is a rack of pies warming and a pot of coffee and a boxy radio behind a bartender with a cigarette on his lip, a smugly-amused look in his eyes, and the police officer leans down to the boy whose socks are slouching into untied shoes and he smiles, and those eye wrinkles are my father's, the uniform stretching across broad shoulders is my father's, the too big for the barstool and the boots grounded steadily against the ledge are my father's, but my belt is crooked and my toes can't reach and i just want to run away, but then he leans toward me, almost conspiratorially, and asks me if i want a piece of pecan pie with vanilla bean ice cream, and i wonder what on earth i was running from in the first place, because now

i am safe.