**Shoulders**

*by Aislinn Hunter*

My father must have carried me on his shoulders,

although I don’t remember. There are so many photos

of my sister in his arms or slung over his shoulder

and one in his red convertible when she was two or three

5 and he’d set her in the passenger seat. Autumn in Sudbury,

a few yellow leaves scattered over the upholstery.

I have my own memory of leaves that must have come

from a good height, how else could I have reached them?

Tugging and twisting at the stems, pulling by the fistful

10 those mottled flags, ruby-brown spans twice the width

of my hand. Where did I learn the names of trees,

who showed me the cocoons of caterpillars, let me touch

those white gauzy strands, luminescent tightropes

strung between fingers?

15 This is how I imagine children are shown the world,

their ankles held tight in their fathers’ hands

as they lean and lean forward, reach out between branches,

the canopy of leaves swirling above and the small

dark eyes of birds, watching. The whole world in that space,

20 in the way I imagine my father carrying me on his shoulders,

stepping left then right as if dancing.

Why is it I only look up in recollections, at hands and sky

instead of feet? I remember the brown elbows of branches

mid-waltz above me, the spin and whirl as I turned,

25 sunlight in oblong patterns. A snapshot. I remember

that childhood as if from a great height, the smell of moss

and dust, a thatched nest in the crooked neck of the tree,

the ground coming up to greet me years before I was ready.

**Journal #54: How does the speaker in the poem remember their childhood? Use examples? How does this compare to how you remember your childhood?**