

The Seven-Ten Split

I tried to kiss my father at the bowling alley
in celebration of my first strike,
but he recoiled in fear of what the other bowlers might think
about a boy kissing his father.

I had seen other fathers and sons enclasped,
adhering to the etiquette written
for celebrating touchdowns, pine wood derby victories, and hellos,
but not at such a sacred venue.

My ball returned as I began nervously drying my hands
over the fountain of warm stale air which
smelled in a way that cannot be described
other than that of bowling ball.

So rare were these father-and-son moments when a tiny victory
would rear its tiny head in his sight
(his eyes usually were closed in agitated slumber)
and feared that I had tarnished the moment.

But the other bowlers appeared to have not noticed my blunder
as they struggled to retie the slippery gray laces of their patchwork shoes
and ran their hands through thinning heads of hair,
hands that had not touched their fathers in years.

I lost interest in bowling after that,
and other things which could have proven precarious,
but I would go bowling again if my father asked me,
maintaining proper social distancing.