

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

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This wistful poem shows how the familiar and the odd, the real and imaginary, exist side by side. A Midwestern father transforms himself from a staid businessman into a rock-n-roll star, reclaiming a piece of his imaginary youth. In the end, it shows how fragile moments might be recovered to offer a glimpse into our inner lives.

My Father Holds the Door for Yoko Ono

In New York City for a conference
on weed control, leaving the hotel
in a cluster of horticulturalists,
he alone stops, midwestern, crewcut,
narrow blue tie, cufflinks, wingtips,
holds the door for the Asian woman
in a miniskirt and thigh high
white leather boots. She nods
slightly, a sad and beautiful gesture.
Neither smile, as if performing
a timeless ritual, as if anticipating
the loss of a son or a lover.

Years later, Christmas, inexplicably
he dons my mother's auburn wig,
my brother's wire-rimmed glasses,
and strikes a pose clowning
with my second hand acoustic guitar.
He is transformed, a working class hero
and a door whispers shut,
like cherry blossoms falling.

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