

BROOKE CLARK

Domestic Man

for Johnny Smith

The notes seemed to come from out of nowhere
in an effortless, articulated stream
into the hushed listening studio
or candlelit club, but then the dream

was shattered—from the maternity ward
to your wife's funeral—could it really be?—
an infant daughter, a plane ticket, Colorado,
and a music teacher's salary.

It defies imagination that you left New York
for those moments unseen, unknown
to anyone but you—unrecorded notes
played once into the air, then gone.

You turned your back on everything you'd built—
planned albums, scheduled shows—like someone in love
with some greater achievement, you put aside
the glory you'd been dreaming of

for a home crowded with toys and games,
walks in the park, teatime with the dolls,
storybooks at bedtime every night—
these moments, now, are where the accent falls,

and you've accepted that this is your life—
you made your choice, and what is there to say?
Maybe it's not exactly dreamsville
but beautiful in its own way.

Some nights, when your daughter's deep in a dream
do you pick up a guitar, bring the strings alive,
your fingers finding those chord shapes in some
familiar pattern—ii-V-I or simply I-IV-V?

Somehow, the artist finds ways to survive
but once in a while did you pause, regret
the life you left? Or were you sure you were right,
even if no one else could see it yet?

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