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Retelling the Story

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Retelling the Story

The moon rides fast
these new black nights
and walking's cold. You can
click your teeth and head home
or stalk your shadow the length
of its legs backward—to mornings
you've already loved, to a story
you've already told.

You tell it again:
you're taking the trail
that climbs to the Pass.
An early morning. A two-year-old
rides your shoulders, an elf
in her dark blue hood.
A five-year-old's tawny thatch
bobs before you, the only warm color
in the low autumn sky of gray sky.

There's bounce to the sturdy trudge
of the boy up ahead. The mountains
take shape as you climb, step after step
on the trail's gray rock, rock broken
by wind and by cold. You're nearing
those clouds with their promise
of storm when a flutter
in the boy's thatch blurs orange,

is red, is black: a butterfly clings
to the gold of his hair, the only
warm color riding the mountain.

You call out, "Son, a butterfly's
resting in your hair!" He stops,
turns back to you slowly, wonder
blue in his eyes, his smile sly
with caution. He turns again
to the Pass, his head held still
so his stride won't jostle
his lovely burden. And the last
long mile to the wind at the top
the butterfly clings to the boy's
gold thatch, to the only warm
color rising.