

EMPTY NESTER

By Olivia Klimek

The vaulted windowed living room ceiling
makes an empty house emptier.

The pictureless frames
lining the baby powder white walls
close in on a big-headed man and his guilt.

My father is a lonely man,
like one car in a driveway
and I can feel it from 456 miles away—
as the neighbors do
leering in at the dim dining room overhead light
brightening the silhouette of a
table set for one.

He's still adjusting to the left overs
of a recipe designed to feed four
and a nightly Tupperware scrub routine,
a red sauce-tinged catastrophe
that would have lightened the air
of that always stiff room.

Maybe it's the wifeless kitchen
or the dogless bowls—
still slobber stained,
in this bare bones home
that talk to his soul.
that nag and nag.

He calls about then,
dabs his eyes and resents my pity,
I won't give him any.

I tell him to do the dishes,
to try,

to rest.