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When My Friend Tells Me My Father Doesn't Seem That Bad

at lunch before my wedding I agree because of course
my father can be a tree full of leaves in the summer

my friend stood off near the corner of my wedding reception
beer in hand my father's smiling face atop his stiff body

I love my friend who travelled three states to be there
that day when my father would travel I would be

so excited he was leaving still too young to know
why I felt safe and I love my friend but I can't

give him the memory of my father in the fire of an afternoon full
of broken glass from the picture frame hit against his desk

to make a point my constant dread of when he came home
later and later my friend is somewhat joking I know

but like a joke followed with *no offense* there is a layer
of seriousness my father has mellowed in his age

a dormant volcano still smelling of sulfur I am walking
the smooth black lava it has cooled

to a sheen in the afternoon light it is almost as beautiful
as a smile but it covers what it has burned