

# Dawn of Man

By Max Ritvo

After the cocoon I was in a human body  
instead of a butterfly's. All along my back

there was great pain — I groped to my feet  
where I felt wings behind me, trying

to tilt me back. They succeeded in doing so  
after a day of exertion. I called that time,

overwhelmed with the ghosts of my wings, sleep.  
My thoughts remained those of a caterpillar —

I took pleasure in climbing trees. I snuck food  
into all my pains. My mouth produced language

which I attempted to spin over myself  
and rip through happier and healthier.

I'd do this every few minutes. I'd think to myself  
*What made me such a failure?*

It's all a little touchingly pathetic. To live like this,  
a grown creature telling ghost stories,

staring at pictures, paralyzed for hours.  
And even over dinner or in bed —

still hearing the stories, seeing the pictures —  
an undertow sucking me back into myself.

I'm told to set myself goals. But my mind  
doesn't work that way. I, instead, have wishes

for myself. Wishes aren't afraid  
to take on their own color and life —

like a boy who takes a razor from a high cabinet  
puffs out his cheeks and strips them bloody.

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