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Rafaella Del Bourgo

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Picture of My Father, the Accountant

by Rafaella Del Bourgo

Behind him
the Ventura Hills bleach in the sun
and his face is set and serious
as if to warn predators—
coyote or the occasional puma—
that he is on the job
and they should cling
to those narrow paths
they've carved into the scrub behind the stables
and not interfere with him
in his navy blue jump-suit.

His left hand gentle on the muzzle
of his horse
his right hand rests
on the head of a portly German shepherd
who barks with a Teutonic accent.
She has thrown her paws against his chest
despite her training not to
and he seems to tilt backward
but will not fall.

On Monday,
he will scrape grey stubble
from his week-end face
struggle into a rumpled shirt
clip on a tie
which will droop like his thin hair in the heat.
He will stop for coffee and donuts
over-tip the waitress
then spend the day
riding his adding machine
down linoleum canyons
and counting saddle-bags of money
for other men.

