

Steve Deutsch

Sonder

Dad would never
let on how he got
his nickname.

Even mom, who used
Sonny for all but scolds,
wasn't telling

and you'd have
more luck convincing
some chicken Colonel

to part
with the nuclear codes
than in persuading

his old friends
to let you in
on the secret.

A shrug
and a wink
was the most they would offer.

Hey,
we had theories—
perhaps

some relic
of a wild
and lurid past—

though dad
was the kindest man
I ever knew.

Buddha—
watching a crop
of neophytes

search for enlightenment
could not have
been more pleased

than dad
as we tried to puzzle
it out.

Once, just before he passed,
dad and I took
a gentle stroll

around the neighborhood
and he pointed
to a stranger and said

there is
a whole life
we cannot imagine.

But I didn't
make
the connection.

Just last week
a friend used
sonder on a triple word

in Scrabble.
I lost the challenge,
but finally understood.

And, now the word,
like some fond, fair memory,
will never leave me.

Steve Deutsch lives in State College, PA. His recent publications have or will appear in *MacQueen's*, *8 Poems*, *Louisiana Lit*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *The Write Launch*, *Biscuit Root Drive*, *Evening Street*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *Flashes of Brilliance*, *SanAntonio Review*, *Softblow*, *Mojave River Review*, *The Broadkill Review*, *Linden Avenue Literary Journal*, *Panoply*, *Algebra of Owls*, *The Blue Nib*, *Thimble Magazine*, *The Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Ghost City Review*, *Borfski Press*, *Streetlight Press*, *Gravel*, *Literary Heist*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *Misfit Magazine*, *Word Fountain*, *Eclectica Magazine*, *The Drabble*, *New Verse News* and *The Ekphrastic Review*. He was nominated for Pushcart Prizes in 2017 and 2018. His Chapbook, *Perhaps You Can*, was published in 2019 by Kelsay Press. His full length book, *Persistence of Memory* will be published by Kelsay in September 2020.

