

Red Brick

On my walk in the neighborhood tonight I saw a house
red brick, with wooden boards on the side
it looked just like mine.

I paused, seeing it for the first time
on a street I had walked,
but had never seen a sign

The more I studied it, the more I saw my own
Crumbling, broken childhood home

I wondered who the people in this house were, inside.
When was the last time they cried?
Were they anything like my family?
Or was their domestic bliss easy?

The architect, surely,
must have been
the same,

And I had to hold myself back from the door, as I stood
wondering what could have happened in my house
on a street
with a different name.

...and you can say things
very well may have completely gone
the exact same.
But I demand
acknowledgement of this other place,

somehow in this house, there's more space,
living here would have given us any ounce of grace.

I turned my back to the house,
into the cold wind as it blew across my face,
for, like the memories I had begun to chase,

the moment was over,
gone, without a trace.

illness

I'm tired of hearing you cry, Mom
so late into the night, Mom.
Your troubles fall into tears
which tiptoe down the hall,
past his room
into mine
where I wait by the door

Collecting them into a bucket
adding to the bank of reasons why I have to act, to run,
something must be done, before the dam bursts

I'm tired of him making you cry, Mom.
You don't deserve to suffer, Mom.
I know (he is) your own flesh and blood
the diapers you changed, the red hairs
you nurtured through
as if you grew them upon the head of your own

little league games, boy scouts, middle school, licenses,
fist fights, drugs, detention, suspension, retention, hopelessness

when he was old enough —
backs of police cars, the mind hospital
a Thanksgiving where our family ate two turkeys, one on a cardboard tray in a visitors' room,
surrounded by strangers and their families
and my beloved little brother, too old for that place yet too young to belong with adults,
trapped and miserable

another turkey long dead and cold,
delicious, at home, on a glass plate,
consumed at a table with one vacant spot.

But Mom, you grew him
and he is now
rotting the same roots
which brought me into this world

loving, kind, providing
the very same diaper changing,
blonde curl brushing, soccer watching,
graduation day clapping,

cut and scrape cleaning
hands
now held up to your face

I cannot sit idly by and watch
your branches produce liquid leaves,
to hear you sob until tears run dry
any longer.

Unjust. But what can be done?
As I sit, behind my door

holding your tears
to my heart
with my hands.

Not justice, but grace

At a certain point in time,
I realized the ultimate irony in seeking justice is,
regardless of someone being put away,
the situation has already been lost
on both sides.

It does not matter, it did not
ever matter to me
what became of the man responsible
for my brother's murder

For my brother was already,
irreversibly, unavoidably gone
from earth.

I'd never know him again in this lifetime

So what was the point
of taking the lifetime
of knowing and seeing
away from the man
who took it from me?

For that man, I learned,
also had
a brother.

The question I always come back to

You're there, aren't you?

In the space in my heart
that hasn't stopped aching
since you left

You're there aren't you?
In the hole, in the cavern, in the pit of my stomach
which gnaws when I think of
(what) your fate (was).

You're there aren't you?

In the glimmers of the water, on the tops of
the trees, in the notes of the music
in the background of my life,
notes only I can hear,
waves only I can see,
a rustle in the wind sent straight to me

watching from a shrub,
looking down from the clouds,

You're there, aren't you?

The Life That Scattered

Grief is the Big Bang,
an explosion of galaxies
an alteration of life as you had not known it,
something some still deny.

The death which erupts from stars lit on fire,
sets forth new life.
galaxies, planets waiting to be discovered.

I hope to die many deaths in my life.

I will so many Big Bangs, each one
bigger and louder than the last

for on the other side of the scattering pieces,
the cosmic eruption, and destruction of What Once Was

is the unthinkable, the frontier of What Will Be.
The new order of the galaxies, stars, moon, and tides

all created

from the dust

of the stars left behind

the life

that scattered.