

## A Eulogy for My Son

### Discarded Socks

Two weeks after your funeral, I find your little brothers' socks, crumpled into misshapen balls, peeled from small, sweaty feet, forgotten under Star Wars sheets.

Wet Wookiee odor origin? *Check.*

Existence of the household Sock Monster? *Debunked.*

Evidence of the life lived here? *Present.*

A smile nearly escapes at this revelation, and I choke, pulling it back from the aching corners of my lips. Working the third shift at Amazon, your mornings were our afternoons. Devoted alarms, the boys raced down the hall, shedding muddied shoes, half-zipped backpacks, empty lunch boxes.

Fearless, they braved your darkness, peeled away layered quilts to nestle beside you, their lilting voices bemoaning the evils of fractions, the injustice of playground politics.

Fingers slow, I sift through what's left of you:

Crumpled chip bags leaking orange dust.

Paper plates with dried noodles and congealed sauce.

Four fluorescent safety vests.

Two pairs of work gloves.

One identification badge, superfluous.

Folded notebook paper with a blue-scribbled number you will never call.

Afternoons are more quiet now.

Your brothers hang their backpacks on hallway hooks, place lunch boxes by the sink. They collapse in the living room, watching your favorite Anime on repeat.

I find their socks wedged into couch cushions.

## Your Return

You come back to us in the car, crammed  
as we are among fleece throws, pillows, paper  
wrappers discarded on stained carpet floor.

Nestled in the debris of large-family travel,  
we pass cows and cornfields enroute to the lake,  
the first of all journeys forever incomplete.

Light pours between the clouds  
turning asphalt blinding bright:  
the roads they promised you.

Your siblings sing Taylor Swift,  
off-key voices loud, lifted by  
still-breathing lungs.

Nothing is safe from you.  
A ghost in every moment,  
your nowhere is everywhere.

Amazon brings birthday gifts  
that sit in the hall, unopened:  
a monument of rain-dampened cardboard.

Netflix advertises a new season of our show;  
you'll never know if she makes it  
or not.

I want to tell you that she does.  
Euphoric, she wakes from the nightmares  
to walk on streets of gold.

## Personalized Christmas Ornaments

I decorated the tree today.  
Pulled memories from plastic bins:  
your decade with us.

For seventeen years, they called you by the wrong name.  
You chose a new label, and we wrote it boldly, in black Sharpie,  
on stocking tops, plump penguin bellies, sparkling snowflakes:  
glass monuments bathed in twinkling light.

Nestled among the greens, surrounded by ceramic angels and woodland creatures,  
you stay with us.

Your brother left Spiderman clinging to a low-hanging branch, ready for rescue.  
Dad placed Darth Vader and Yoda just above, balancing the Force.  
We hid garish glass pizzas and plastic cheeseburgers;  
we promised you'd never be hungry again.  
We meant it.

Near the top, we secured a porcelain sparrow, mid-flight.

We hope the afterlife is half this good. Full of colors, heroes, singing hippos,  
and misfits calling one another by name.

