

Nowhere

God is everywhere,
Mama used to say as she'd brush my hair before bed.
He watches you through your whole life
and helps you stay steady before you fall off the ledge,
or maybe he pushes you off to help bring you back.
As I grew up,
I looked for God everywhere—
he was the big man from the bank who came to our house
and told us we couldn't stay there anymore.
He was the big snow storm that hit our tiny, new apartment—
all of us kids shivered for hours, bumps raising on our skin.
Not even the blankets Grandma knitted us
could silence the chattering of our teeth.
He was the heart monitor that tried to keep my brother alive
after he got pneumonia.
He slept so soundly when he was in the hospital,
the steady rise and fall of his belly in tune with the beep beep beep
that helped us all drift off at night,
until the night we could no longer hear it.
He was the empty seat at the table at dinnertime,
reminding us of what we had lost.
Mama shot them daggers when they'd place one of their toys on his chair—
she told them that was their brother's seat,
and no one was good enough to sit there but him,
not even those \$50 baby dolls.
God was the job that kept Mama away from us every day—
with our brother gone, babysitting was suddenly \$7 an hour
and she needed as many hours at the restaurant as possible now.
Dying is expensive, she laughed. Do you think people try to stay alive just so they don't have
so many bills?
God is the hand that holds Mama's as I prepare for my own bills.
She distracts herself with idle conversation

about forgetting to vacuum the rug my brother gave her
almost 20 years ago now. Soon, though, she runs out of topics
and lets her tears do the talking.

God is nowhere, she says,
stroking my hand and fixating on the gold band.

He doesn't bring us to the edge of disaster
or to our greatest achievements—that's Life.

Life has shown me love, joy, and more importantly pain;
Life helps you stay steady before you fall off the ledge
and pushes you off to bring you back.

God is nowhere
and Life is everywhere,
she says one last time before both take her with them.

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