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# the first time my brother told me he wanted to kill himself

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Footer Logo

## the first time my brother told me he wanted to kill himself

*Brooke Nelson*

I saw his life  
flash  
before my eyes.  
A naked toddler  
runs across the room.  
His stream of yellow  
paints the walls  
like a lemon sprinkler.  
He is two.

I am up early,  
Mom at work,  
“Dad” in bed.  
I make scrambled eggs and tie his shoes.  
Cartoons on for the little ones,  
I walk him across the street  
to the doors of his classroom  
before finding my own.  
He is five.

The divorce doesn’t treat us kindly.  
He asks our mother for  
bread  
peanut butter  
jelly  
and spaghetti  
to take with him.  
They are things he can make alone.  
He is eight.

We spend hours after school  
nostonose,

spitting out frustration  
the way his father showed us.  
The words sail from our mouths  
like knives,  
leaving scars I still feel  
sunken between my ribs.  
He is eleven.

I make four flower crowns.  
His is purple.  
He flips off the camera,  
grinning—  
He is fourteen.

He's telling me about his car  
Speeding towards a hundred  
And he's crying  
And he's telling me that he had his destination set for a fir tree  
and he's *crying*  
He tells me he swerved for our brother  
He tells me he's *alive* for our brother  
All I can think is  
*what about me?*  
He is seventeen.

Now,  
I try to remember  
when those  
autumn eyes  
shift to winter—  
*he is eighteen.*