2019

And Not By Sight

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Nelle
Nancy Reddy

**And Not By Sight**

I wake in the dark,  
the new baby kicking in my belly, my son asleep  
across the hall. No one’s dead. Still,  
I see the bodies everywhere:

one boy shot down in a playground, another  
facedown on a beach. I can’t look  
and can’t stop looking. Why should I be spared?

Half-walking in the dark, I see  
baby belly puffed out in the bath, laughing,  
the small pink spots along his insteps  
where new shoes rubbed skin raw, see his sweet face  
slipping under. I blink hard to clear the vision. If he were dead  
he wouldn’t be in that body. I don’t believe in God,  
so he wouldn’t be waiting for me elsewhere, either. He’d just  
be dead, but I know that if I had to send  
his perfect body into the earth, I’d bundle my own body  
in beside him. I remember how my mother  
laid a cream cashmere wrap  
across her mother in the casket. I didn’t want her to be cold,  
she said. Now, years later, no one’s dead. I’m sitting  
in the driveway outside daycare, stuffed with tears,  
thinking about shutting the baby in a box and sending him  
into the ground alone. I don’t believe he’s only  
in his body. But where is he, then? He can’t speak yet  
to say, and if he walked down the street alone, he’d just
be gone, not yet able
to name himself home. I love him

with my hands. The air outside the car is so cold
it stings my chapped knuckles. He’s safe inside,
in a room that smells of spaghetti and syrup, tossing cars
down a plastic track. I go inside
and hold him to be sure.