The Daily Deaths

I
Like her spring-cut roses
mother finally tired—
of being dwarfed in a king-sized
with only radio companions
and fear of silent phones—
her spirit doused, salty,
flowing through tears
I almost cried.
Which is the genetic trait:
she almost died,
I nearly cried?

As a flashed sneer
(like a mugger's blade
in sodium's dirty light)
I feel the trespass of pain
long held inside—
memories of mother's
attempt at suicide.

II
Long carver knife
with blade burnished as a saber
was one of her tools.
Worn handle of wood
oiled by daily embrace
reminded me of Father McInery's
neck-draped crucifix.

Just 4 years old
I'd grabbed that knife
waved it at her
like the wooden swords of my play
to announce, "Mommy I'm going to
kill you."
And she, "Now what would you want
to do that for?"

III
Razored blade glinting in her
familiar grip
(decades later at my brother's
wedding)
seemed to drive her bitter stare
burning into my chest
such that I longed for the
protection
of Father McInery's cross.

IV
Seeing her storm flash my father
I prayed for the summer of
childhood
to blow through me dry and clear,
that I might believe
"Now what would you want to do
that for?"

God, we were all born to die!
Where, oh mother where,
did I learn to attempt it every day:
watching my child's acts flow by
unpraised
as I choke in streams of
self-immersion;
selfish lies not whispered—even
in confession;
swallowing colors too quickly
to taste?

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