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Revising the Storm, 1991

(For E)

I.

This childhood memory sneaks up on me, little Brother,
like the storm that summer afternoon. I could be thinking

of a color, a girl, and suddenly it will be there, large
and gray and waiting for accuracy. Most details I get right: how,

days earlier, the baler—perhaps in a rush, perhaps distracted
by anticipations for evening flesh—left the bales of hay too close

for the flatbed to pass between. And so the men told us to roll hay
to be muscled away from the storm, from the coming rain that

threatened every mouth on the farm—my arms eight years old, yours seven,
neither strong enough to stay ahead of the truck. But this is where my . . .

I was going to say *memory fails me*, but perhaps it is something more
immediate, more violent, like *pride* or *shame* that fails me. Was it I

who lost nerve and fled as the first raindrops fell and lightning
downed the large maple just beyond the pasture? Or was it your

eyes that apologized as you turned weeping for the house?
In our retelling, I always stay, though we've left out the part where

I cry after you're gone, certain that catching me alone like that,
brotherless and soaked with rain, felt like vengeance—easy, human.

II.

We have grown so thin, Brother. And, today, that thinness makes these going clouds seem desperate in their going.

I know to blame the wind and not the clouds, which might be a metaphor for our love, because I cannot help but feel a similar hurt wonderment—

that they go so far, that they grow so thin.

III.

What would it mean to revise this memory? Perhaps we could return to some first faith, some uninterrupted union. Let us turn memory's blade

against ourselves, harness that constant crisis to improve the current state of things between us. Let me forever be the one who watches you weep from beneath the eaves of the farmhouse, whose young guts split with the thundered air.

I want to be forgiven now. I need you to know that I have already returned to your side, embarrassed and ready again to face down the storm.