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The Funeral

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The Funeral

Tom Hill

My father drove the little wooden cross
into the ground, and I wondered,
at age eleven, if it was sacrilege:
burying the rabbit we'd found
torn apart by a crow in the yard,
its small heart still now,
its fur and ears mangled with blood and dirt.
We even said a prayer, I think,
my mother bowing her head
as a car shot down the alley,
kicking up dust,
and my father walked away,
swinging the shovel he'd used
to scrape the rabbit from the sidewalk,
to dig its shallow grave.
His hair was just beginning to grey,
and as he walked to the porch,
the sun sank behind him,
throwing his shadow against the house.
That left four of us standing
by the grave, with the little cross
one of us had made in Sunday school:
two rough planks of wood fastened
with a single nail. I never stopped
to wonder what the neighbors might think.
I only thought of what brave
Catholics we were,
that we could face this and go on.