

This Wreck

And yes, to answer your first question,
that old car is my car in the front yard
with its three stained hubcaps
and weeds growing up around the soft tires
and a bird-shit spattered hood
that last fall's leaves have worked under.

And yes, it was a well-polished maroon
when I bought it those years ago,
a time I remember my wife being pregnant again
and wanting a reliable car
that wouldn't break down during labor
or on the way to the hospital. Or as it happened
on that unforeseen third morning of her life
when we drove our daughter away from home
after midnight, blanketed in her new blue car seat,
running a funny little newborn fever
her doctor cleared his telephone voice about,
before saying he'd be waiting
in the emergency room when we came in.

And yes, he was there in his brown cardigan
after we made the harrowing five-mile drive.
And he stayed with us in the brilliant examining room
as specialists appeared in their coats
and the one upholding a spinal tap syringe,
seeing my face, suggested we'd all be better off
if I waited in the next room.

And yes, there followed some weeks
cut off at the knees, and stunned hours
smoking in the unforgettable hospital parking garage
before being hauled off like freight to my next stop
by gasoline exploding in the cylinders.

And yes, fortunately, the meningitis was caught early.
And she was a lucky girl, the doctors said,
and we were all lucky then and now
that she's better than okay with her dancing
and her clean brown hair pinned up in a bun.

And yes, you can understand how sometimes
these high summer evenings home late from work
I open all four doors of the old car
until the steaming, inside, swollen air escapes.
And settling into one broken seat or another
I look out through the chipped windshield,
inhaling the stale, sour, wonderful,
sun-blasted upholstery smell. And then I try thinking
of nothing but road maps baking safely in the glove box
and ballet shoes being tied by small fingers
and nobody going anywhere ever again
in this wreck that will stay in my yard
thank you dear God
for as long as the rest of this takes.