

But life is done. He is dead. Everything is still. The old man is gone. The boy is gone. The room is empty and silent.

I am pushed aside; the paramedics arrive and take him away. Everything moves faster. Reality is a blur. My sister and I are taken to a friend's house. I am not there though; I am still coming back from somewhere else. The rest of the day passes quickly. In seconds I am back home wandering around numb.

Outside, spring is gone; the day is over, the streets are empty, doors locked, and windows closed. All the energy has been used up. There is nothing but darkness outside. The house is dark and hollow. Family has gathered; they sit in the kitchen, quiet, holding onto each other. The light from the kitchen draws the shadows long. They wrap around me.

I come to stand in his room. I notice the ball he played with, picking it up, cradling the toy in my hand, staring at it, lost. I need breath. I approach the empty bed and carefully climb into it. Something of myself has slipped into the vacuum, leaving the emptiness that will take everything to fill. My grandmother quietly comes into the room. She cannot see that my eyes are open, watching her. She thinks I am asleep, Grandma moves closer and in dark silence covers me. I am gone. There is no longer a boy here. Whatever is left breathes deeper than most.

