

For Brandon

Your voice still haunts me
like those white rocking chairs
on the veranda or the handprints
on the mirror that just
wont go away

I still see you
standing there in the shadows
back against the garage door
white smoke cascading from your lips
like the fog creeping
across the lawn

Your somber eyes still hold
that shallow stare, hollow
like your empty room
it's a tempting façade
but an empty tomb

Sometimes you come to me
in my dreams, while
everyone else is sleeping

Your sly smile beckons me
with that sweet come hither

I wander dark hallways
searching for your face
but the darkness is consuming
like a candle snuffed out
twenty-two years too soon.

Your voice echoes, resonating
and angelic like a boy
whose cheeks are pink
with delight; like a boy
whose tiny shoulders
have never felt the weight
of the world

"Don't cry." You tell me. "I'm right here."
"It's all gonna be okay."

—*Brittany Violet Long*