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# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Chanel Brenner: Three Poems

Chanel Brenner · Wednesday, March 10th, 2021

### When They Call to Tell You Your Son Is Dying

Go to your vanity  
and greet your ghost.

Smooth foundation  
onto your ashen face.

Dot concealer on dark  
under-eye circles.

You must dust your face  
with rice powder,

mark your cheekbones  
with bloodroot.

Gloss your lashes with mascara,  
separate them with a brush.

Paint your lips  
with Afghan red.

Draw fierce blue lines  
around your eyes.

If anyone asks  
why you're doing this,

say it's the last time  
you will look this alive.

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## We Never Heal, Just Remember Less

Stretching my legs  
after a walk down our old street,  
  
my dead son's face came to me,  
the scar below  
  
his left eyebrow, the window  
of his missing two front teeth  
  
so clear, I had to sit  
for a minute, on someone else's porch.  
  
Four years since Riley died;  
since the tsunami hit Japan—  
  
all those children swept away.  
You'd think we'd heal, yet today,  
  
at our younger son's game,  
as Desmond raced toward home,  
  
his father cheered, Go Riley!  
We stared at one another,  
  
seeing our first son  
fall all over again—  
  
skull of memory cracked open  
against concrete.

\*

## Desmond's Older Brother Is

A blank space on the family tree  
Desmond fills in for homework.  
  
Old photos fading on our kitchen wall.  
  
A question  
he doesn't like to answer.  
  
A secret confession  
to a friend in class.  
  
A book of poems  
he doesn't want to read.  
  
A canceled playdate.

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## Memories

he can't remember.

The vanilla milk Desmond likes to buy,  
but never drinks.

A candle on our fireplace mantel.

Younger than he is now.

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