

not all the boys at the orphanage
were mistreated
but her brother was.
they came for him at night
until he went to them during the day.
one day he was released
as a woman with an exaggerated voice
and small craft skills.
he always needed the older money
she married to be rescued and adored.

she always needed more shoes
more hats
more dresses
more jewelry
more intangibles.
one day her husband was suddenly dead.
one day the money was gone.
her brother stayed.

her charm became an executive assistant
at the downtown bank
booking flights
making arrangements
scheduling connections
until the year of massive layoffs
called a reduction in force
by the reducers
looking the other way
you look when you break people.

social begging set in.
she created smaller and smaller rescues.
her brother created more fears
willing to harm himself blackmail.

she had been at the same
underregulated orphanage
with different sticky men
who stuck to her dreams
in stickiness.
she dressed for the occasion.
her brother undressed for his.
the only difference was the timing.
not the makeup.

every day that was not a crisis
was accumulating for
the next one.

it saddened me when her brother cried.
it saddened me when his precious cat died.
it saddened me to watch new mornings of hysteria.
a terrible loneliness together.

it saddened me
that i was not more saddened
when i left her with him
but they had become a single
death keepsake
of abandonment
in a closed locket they wore only for each other.

for each other.
wf.h.
2026