

Powell

they found him in a ravine
seatbelt still attached to his body
the driver, drunk, unharmed and seatbelt-less
walked away

my mother received that call in the darkest hours of a moonless night
the news, like a poison, spread all throughout her pregnant body
that shock entered my own system for the following 6 months
and followed me like a shadow into my life outside the womb

we joke that I was born unhappy
frowning and exhausted, like I didn't want to be here
manifested in human form
like I was upset that some force had made me real
like I was happier in the clouds and the wind
floating on the stars and in the currents

bodies can be a painful place to put your spirit

my family reminds me of my uncle often, whom I share a middle name with
connected to him, in so many visceral ways
my own birth attached to his death
my mother's heavy heart imprinting onto mine
I was born with her grief

but I have never met him and I never will

I know him through the stories my grandmother tells about him
she speaks his words and his memories and they are just as relevant now to me as it was her then

those stories often float back and forth from hilarity to sadness
from casual tales of his daily life to deep introspections he made

I also know him through the love my mother still has for him
with the tears she sheds when those memories come up
that loss still engraved on her spirit
I can feel those tears
they are warm and they are real to me

the photos of Bart I've seen have always made me think of a baseball player on a playing card
ever since I was a child when I learned about my missing uncle

Sun-lit and charismatic

his 90's hairstyle, his rosy cheeks and his smile apparently lit up many rooms and front porches

my mother still has a hard time whenever I need to call her in the middle of the night
she always prefers that I call rather than not, of course
but when I do, I've learned how to comfort her
and tell her that I'm still alive and safe when the past kicks up
so that she can return to the present
where I am here and he is not

I try to be mindful in navigating around that pain
because I love my family
and want them close to me
the ones that still occupy their bodies
and the ones that have lost them at some point in time

they are now again where I once was
floating on the stars and in the currents
and they still visit from time to time

we can't quite fully let them go