

The red trees are dancing in the wind,  
and bunches of leaves are running over the lawns.

In photographs, my young father  
and his siblings would scatter over these sidewalks,  
running out of church with arms wild  
and smiles wide.

Today, I am passing through these neighborhoods,  
cold to my eyes but colorful in my memories.  
These streets, in years decades apart,  
are where my father and I were both children.

When I was growing up,  
he would take me along to visit his mom and dad;  
it was just him and I.

I remember our Sunday mornings,  
first in the pews and then around the kitchen table,  
enjoying the best pancakes I have ever known.

I remember the books he read to me  
in the room he and his brother shared;  
I would fall asleep in the top bunk.

I remember our Saturday summer nights,  
racing together on our bikes to beat the sunset home,  
coasting and sweating on hills, coming back from the lake.

I remember heading up there on Friday mornings,  
especially when I got to skip class —  
driving under glowing clouds,  
nearly bouncing on the radio waves of 60's pop,  
stopping at gas stations bordering wheat fields  
and walking out with salty snacks under the rising sun.

And I remember, just before one Thanksgiving,  
Grandmother's car accident.

I remember Dad's halves of the anxious phone calls  
that he relayed cross-country through our living room,  
and seeing Grandma together during her final weeks  
in the nursing home, on her back in bed, bitter and immobile in  
her neck brace.

I remember seeing the trees bare in town  
for the first time at her December funeral,  
and all the cars lined up like pebbles around the block.

I remember Dad lending me a tie,  
seeing my cousins in their dress clothes,  
and feeling strange in a familiar place  
as we processed in for Mass.

I remember that the eulogies were long  
and that the homily was quick,  
and that I heard many new stories after her burial.  
That is the end of my childhood memories.