

BIG BROTHER

When I close my eyes, I can see you standing
at the top of the front steps with one hand on your hip
and the other outstretched, finger wagging at me,
“I am your big brother. I will always be older and smarter
than you. You need to listen to me.”

I believed you were a grownup
even though you were only seven.

I remember how you boxed my ears for the fun
of it when Mama left you in charge when she went
to the market. How you yelled at me to clean up our room,
even though half of the mess, half of the pants and socks and shirts
and most of the comic books were yours.

I remember how you ran to the street and helped
me up from the pavement when the skate wheel
popped off of my scooter. How you used
your shirt sleeve to dry the hot tears from my eyes
and offered me a peppermint from your pocket.

All these years later, when I close my eyes
at night, I can hear you whisper as though
you're lying in a bed across the room, with your arms
stretched above your head, feet poking out from the sheets,
“Hey Louis! Wanna hear a story?”