

The Empty Swimming Pool · *James Frazee*

You feel the air cool
as you descend the chrome ladder
to the deep end, to a brief swoop
of wind that sounds like a voice,
the voice of your brother.
He would drift a dead man's float so long
you'd shout for him to quit,
and you'd lay dumb bets against each other,
a sandwich, a movie, it didn't matter,
until the afternoon, practicing by himself,
his lungs gave in and you weren't there
to pull him out.

Now you only shout for him
to come back, stop kidding with death,
but you know the dead can't hear.
Perhaps if you stay in the deep end long enough
to hear his lungs burst like enormous bubbles,
drowning would be just a slow glide
to the bottom. But landing,
how could that stillness comfort you?

You walk toward the shallow end,
it's over, you are no longer a brother,
it's a word he has taken away from you
but you say it out loud,
standing alone in the empty swimming pool.
Half of yourself has been torn away,
and from now on in everything you see
there will be a half you cannot see
like the moon that has somehow remained in daylight,
pale, isolate, and dichotomous.