

that were a kind of paradise, he finally opened his eyes wide,  
and the room filled with a certain light we thought we'd never see again.

*Look at you two*, he said. And we did.

And Joe said, *Look at you*. And John said, *How do I look?*

And Joe said, *Handsome*.

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## How Some of It Happened

My brother was afraid, all his life, of going blind, so deeply  
that he would turn the dinner knives away from *looking at him*

he said, as they lay on the kitchen table.

He would throw a sweatshirt over those knobs that lock the car door

from the inside, and once, he dismantled a chandelier in the middle  
of the night when everyone was sleeping.

We found the pile of sharp and shining crystals in the upstairs hall.  
So you understand, it was terrible

when they clamped his one eye open and put the needle in through his cheek  
and up and into his eye from underneath

and held it there for a full minute before they drew it slowly out,  
once a week for many weeks. He learned to *lean into it*,

to *settle down* he said, and still the eye went dead, ulcerated,  
breaking up green in his head as the other eye, still blue

and wide open, looked and looked at the clock.

After our father died, my brother promised me he wouldn't. He shook my hand on a train going home one Christmas and gave me five years,

as clearly as he promised he'd be home for breakfast when I watched him walk into that New York City autumn night. *By nine, I promise,*

and he was, he did come back. And five years later he gave me five years more. So much for the brave pride of premonition,

the worry that won't let it happen.

*You know, he said, I always knew I would die young. And then I got sober,*

*and I thought, ok, I'm not. I'm going to see thirty and live to be an old man. And now it turns out that I am going to die.*

*Isn't that funny?*

One day it happens: what you have feared all your life,

the unendurably specific, the exact thing. No matter what you say or do.

This is what my brother said: *Here, sit closer to the bed*

*so I can see you.*

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## Just Now

My brother opens his eyes when he hears the door click open downstairs and Joe's steps walking up past the meowing cat

and the second click of the upstairs door, and then he lifts his face so that Joe can kiss him. Joe has brought armfuls