

After My Brother's Remission

Dixie Partridge

When dawn comes this early,
a slice of sky visible from my bed
textures waking. Today's thin layers clabber
white . . .

and I think after all these years
of the back room in the farmhouse,
my siblings and I startled
when a pillow seam gave way
and dumped feathers in drifts
over and around us, the sight almost worth
a new edict from my father, forbidding forever
the pillow fights.

In private moments of those earliest years,
we learned how to scream gleefully
while making hardly a sound,
steeling ourselves in pleasure
or pain (that gradual human habit)—
small offenses and injuries of games
instantly quieted, comforted
between the secret ways of children

who need adults not far
away . . . just outside the rambunctious,
reverent rooms of childhood.