

Even Now

It was 1961 & i was hovering
on thirteen years of age

i was less than a mile from the
starkness of my own street with
its unmade road

 ambling along Galway Avenue –
mid-afternoon

 the sun warming my back . . .
filtered light flecking the footpath
through the white cedars

 & young saplings reaching up
from the wide median strip
alive with the sounds of native birds

it was then i first saw Roslyn

she was twelve & a half wore pigtails
tied with blue ribbon

 & a check dress that sat high
above her knees

i don't know how i found the courage
to chat her up

 i think i began by commenting
on how tiny her freckles were to mine
 but maybe i'm just imagining that . . .
hell this was over fifty years ago

we were standing in dappled shade
 a stone's throw from Mrs Day's
kindergarten so maybe i'd asked
if she'd gone there too

after five minutes of small talk
 all the while both of us moving
from foot to foot
 i began to make a move . . .
& in hindsight so did she

we took off hand-in-hand retracing
her steps
 looking for somewhere private

i wanted to kiss her
 & i'd made my intentions clear

i hadn't kissed a girl before

at the time i shared a bedroom
with two younger brothers
 & when i knew i was alone . . .
i'd practice on the dressing table
mirror always careful to wipe away
any evidence

at the end of Collingrove Ave we came
across a red brick Baptist Church
 & on the side a small porch –
its white wooden doors unlocked

once inside my hands were full
of her & hers with me –
& when our wet tongues touched
 i felt my knees begin to buckle

maybe i became too big for my britches
 anyway –
i must have scared her because she
pulled away & stuttered she had to go
 yet promised she'd meet me
the following day at four o'clock

& even now each time i pass that
red brick church i keep an eye out
for her
 just as i did that following day

& even now when i do think of her
 my breath quickens.