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Cloudburst

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Cloudburst

JOSHUA GORDON

Waking from the Sunday nap, you rub
grubby-eyed at your face and notice
the rain has finally come, like they'd
been saying for days. Everyone had
talked up the storm so that you'd finally
ignored them, just like you had your sister,
Libby, who'd passed away at ten.
Scarlet fever, they'd said then and you
were kept in quarantine until you came to
thinking it was your fault. At first, it
was terrifying when you'd forget her face,
the space in her grin where the last baby
tooth had fallen out, and her hair, unruly
and black as ink. Later, it all became
a dream, something made-up to tell
your friends, a little tragedy to make
you sound more interesting, worldly.
It didn't help Mother and Father gave
you everything except what you wanted—
to see Libby laugh again, trying to coax
you into going out to play in the rain.
Now it's all you can do to set your
forehead against the cool glass of the bay
window, your breath growing on the pane
with each exhale until you decide
to bring in the plants. You open the stiff
screen door and the rain stops;
the conversant patter of drips falling
from waxy leaves and crack of the screen
slamming home beat into your ears.
You glance back at the window and,
for a moment, tell yourself you really saw
her moppy, dark hair and gap-tooth smile
disappear behind your fading breath.