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Death Promises

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Mike Vanden Bosch

*Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither;
Ripeness is all.*

Edgar, *King Lear*

Death lurks to bounce us on our mystic leap.
Though its crabbed legs have not yet clutched my throat
I know now it has “promises to keep.”

Dad’s, mom’s, five sibs’ brief candles are all out.
Mom’s fails first: light swept out with Death’s dark broom.
Ninety—dad’s fire dies from his antidote.

Sixty-nine—cancer eats bro’s flame, entombs
him. Sixty turns blaze black for bro-in-law.
Fifty snuffs young bro’s spark—to the show-room.

Heart raw, I see Nell’s glow sink in Death’s craw.
Death’s hunger, I know, will soon come to reap
more—wafts out bro three’s flicker with guffaw.

Live sibs still have live promises to keep;
Death lurks to bounce us on our mystic leap.