



What Shines?

Astonishing, this never-ending effort
to have had a happy childhood. Why does it matter
now, why will yourself into all that forgetting?
She may have been a good mother- at least she tried.

Did she? Once again, you're the one who's trying.
You contend you do remember moments that glow:
You picture her standing one day in the snow, her teeth
in a chatter, no doubt, and yet she looked quite cheerful-

or she seemed to be trying. As you are. The teeth at least
were one good feature, radiant to the end.
You were poised at the top of a hill on a Flexible Flyer,
red sled that shone, your Christmas present at nine.

It may have brought you joy. You're trying to alter
the down-slope rush, to make it shiny too,
to forget the icicles of snot, the raw
fingers, chilblains. Pain. A father was there,

a good man, you've always believed, who's now no more
than a specter, whose presence is no more advantageous
than on that day. Or was it of some avail?
You can't remember. You honestly can't remember.

Perhaps you just don't want to. You're doing well-
at least you're trying- with this, your obstinate bid
to winnow the damage and see if there's anything more
than just the sorrow. Well, there were certain instants.

You say, *I remember stones.* You say, *I saw
a beach by moonlight.* And did those pebbles glint
like stars, as you insist? Are you quite sure
clouds never came to eclipse them? You keep on trying.

There's that pervasive gleam along the shore.
Then you take a step and suddenly there's nothing

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