

Poem

The Gold Star

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Exemplars here endure these long Sunday nights.
We remember soup or trains or peppermint or tin,
baseball and summer and a distant radio again.

When I was seven I felt sorry for Mrs. Young
next door because she did not have a son any more.
She did have a Gold Star flag in her front window.

All the people of the world walked past her window.
I was sure they all wanted to see her Gold Star.
Mrs. Young looked out and saw me skip by.

How long did those Gold Stars last? Where does
a star go when it fades? *He was her only boy*,
my mother said. Be nice to her, stay off her flowers

growing by the fence. Yet I climbed that fence
anyway, and picked the flowers, wanting beauty
and power of my own. Mrs. Young came outside

and said sternly, "Get down!" and life was reined in.
It is a Monday morning joke: Sundays are depressing.
The world knows why you are late putting your life

in order. How can you, when you must chew open
your own belly to liberate bad, beloved dreams?
The gold cloth star in the window was so pretty,

like the flowers, like the afternoon sun reflected
on the window, where Mrs. Young waited and
watched us, then stared at her newspaper, not poems.