

Steve

La Dispute

Reach for the handbrake now
Pull it upward
Turn the wheel hard
In Danny's car drifting in the parking lot
Midnight at the church
How we'd float on in snowfall
On ice sheets on the asphalt
In circles turned, enclosing underneath

And in the backseat, you and I
Saw CALVARY spinning after in the back of us
Caught you in the glass
Reflected by the streetlights as we passed
I noticed the expressions didn't match

Laughter on the one
Contrasted sadness
The look in your eyes
Against your hands
The ceiling and
Your seatbelt off

Dependent on your strength to anchor you
So forceful was the curve
Sent careening into me first
When Danny sideways crashed into the curb

That's the first thing that came back the day I heard

And we would push a little further every time
Breaking into buildings overnight when we got bored
Bent on cheating death
Turned left on every red
The cars ahead slamming on the brakes

We found purpose in laughing after danger
A curse we shouted out
Shot a gun inside the house once
Leaned over the edge of the rooftop
My belt held in the back
Seven stories up to write my name

You carved DIE YOUNG with a pen
In the skin below your neck
To keep your recklessness closer to the chest
A reminder to reject
A perpetual hanging threat
A promise you kept now
True to yourself – to the end, in a sense

I suspect you always felt that way
No exceptions for the time you spent in ours
And in mine
And you drifted far away from us in time
Out of mind
Out of sight

What else is there to say now but goodbye?

And the last time I saw you
After years we spent apart
You came to my apartment just to talk
Dressed in a suit
Said your life had gotten better
Even then I wasn't sure it was the truth

When Danny called to tell me
I didn't know how you had been
About the benchmarks you'd met in your life
The counterweights to tip
Keep equal weight on either side
The anguish of existing unrequested
And the joy to be alive

And I know now the truth – that a lie is one too
That some things unsaid really aren't in the end
Chief of my regrets?
When he told me how you'd died
I'm ashamed I felt surprised

By your own hand at night
Fired once and survived
And then somehow again
I saw Calvary behind you in the light
Scattered your reflection in the doctrine
And I almost believed
We would enter in elected when we died
Carried by the U and the I in the T.U.L.I.P.
Despite how hard we tried
Both our names circled twice
You and I would get ushered, triumphant
Into heaven and the light

And you reached to find the brake
Nothing there to pull
To be pulled back with grace
From the way you chose to bring yourself relief
Backwards, forwards, on the ice
Circles spinning helpless at the edge
There again
You and I

What else is there to say now but goodbye?