

The First Five Minutes

A Poem By: Marian Nevill

It's the cusp of spring; I can't resist.
Opening the door to savor its essence.

I hand my husband his plate.
Slide brownies in the oven.
Grandkids shouldn't have to wait.

I smile, thinking
They'll be here soon,
Then I hear the telephone ring.

The caller ID makes me wonder
Who is calling from Paradise Grocery?

I press the button; dread washes over me
When a young man's voice interrupts my hello.

Disjointed at first, he frantically asks,
If this is where our son lives at.

Confused, I ask, stalling, perhaps, is it's my husband he's
looking for? It could be Robby's a junior, you see.

I concede, take a breath, and try to engage.
But his words become muddled, I don't want to hear:

"Someone needs to come get the kids."
Choking, I ask why because it's unclear.

I hear the word, fight. "Is he hurt?" I ask.
I hold my breath, waiting for a response I might dread.

I hear the words, "Ma'am, he's been shot."
Words no mother ever wants to hear.

I'm comprehending little now.
Somehow, I manage: "We're on our way."

“Paradise Grocery,” he reminds.
I recall the caller ID now burned in my brain.

I drop the phone and turn to my husband, shouting,
(or screaming), repeating the young man's message.

We rush out the door—plates untouched and ignored.
Our feet unwilling to slog toward the impending.

Leaving the brownies to burn, never to return,
To the life we had before.

That's how it was on a perfect spring day,
The first five minutes of the rest of our lives.