

Wasted

A Tanka

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Initially, he
protested subtly, a
quiet withdrawal
from all organized school sports
his parents enjoyed watching.

Instead of joining
one musical group, he joined
them all – concert choir,
a cappella, madrigal,
all time consuming

which was purposeful.
For less time at home was less
opportunity
for angry accusations
and frustrated questioning.

Less subtle was his
segue into politics,
deliberately
supporting McGovern to
spite his staunch Republican

parents, he conspired
with his teenage partners in
crime to steal and hide
Nixon/Agnew yard signs all
over the slumbering town.

He ran away so
many times, and we found out
later he would sleep
on a wooden pew at the
United Methodist Church.

College didn't stick,
but his music did; so, he
diligently worked
in the industry for years,
randomly relocating.

Sioux Falls, Fort Collins
Chicago, New York City,
always up, always
hyper, a frenzied attempt
to dodge his dreadful demons.

Surrounded by friends
a drink in one hand and a
cigarette burning
in the other, he was on
fire, one witty anecdote

after another.
Didn't sleep, didn't care if
the drugs and the booze
shouldn't mix as long as it
numbed his mind and crushed the pain.

He loved to play host.
Setting the scene, Dean Martin
serenading his
guests, candles flickering, as
some delicious concoction

simmered on the stove.
He had a sweet habit of
tossing a white dish
towel over his shoulder,
nonchalantly and chef-like

continuously
moving and entertaining,
smile in place, keeping
track of melting ice, levels
of liquor, and empty plates.

Eventually,
distractions dwindled and the
relentless pain crept
back . . . slithered under his skin
and besieged his muddled mind.

And, he just gave up.
He quit, surrendered, succumbed,
dumped, and abandoned
us. Fuck that. Fuck vodka and
gin. Fuck denial and fear.

I just want my big brother back.