

Empty Nest

She lived in a house
across from the park,
well-situated
for the three boys
she'd haul, then wheel, then handhold
to the swings every morning
and pretty much
hang out there all day,
ask another mom
to watch them
while she ran home
to make sandwiches.
When the oldest was old enough
to walk to the elementary school
whose roof she could see
from her second floor,
she'd let him hustle his brothers
across the road each afternoon
as she watched from the living room.
A few years later
with the soccer teams arriving
she'd hurry the boys dressed
and they'd clop over
in cleats with their dad,
her following with chairs
and thermoses. All the parents knew her,
knew her house, her boys, her husband
out coiling hose on Sundays.
They had—they needed—
a humongous black SUV.
Now the boys are grown and gone,
oldest and youngest
both out of college;
the middle one killed himself
last year. I was never
inside her house,
just walked by it every day
when I lived down the street,
knew her to say hello to
and joke that she was
well-situated
for the life she had,
the proximity to a park
where her kids could play
as she watched over them
when they were young.