

For Brother de Mik

Dian Saderup

Cupped in your papery palm the rose
was like a wound, flowering.
Your wife nodded when we brought it.
Yes, Papa, yes is pretty. Then
she put it in a bowl to float
and wilt on water.

The light turned ruddy on your faces
as we sat, the evening passing.
You told me how it was to be
a lithographer: *Grease and water
not so friendly with each other,
but I lace them up side to side
on the stone, together they make
my printings nice.* When I left
the room was blue.

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Voice still resonant as rosewood,
after the sickness came you told
me about Holland and the Saints
and marrying beautiful Marjorie. She
brought us lebkuchen with sticky
cherries on a slate-colored plate.
When you ate a small piece she said,
See you can eat. Papa can eat.
She made you hold the gray plate
on your knee.

Christmas Eve, the fire cast orange
shadows on the alcoved walls. I
brought a holly wreath. For the first
time you did not rise when I came
into the room. *Oh, not so well,*
you answered me. I heard you breathe.
*But that's the way of things. The Lord
has always been good.* We watched
the soundless television, a bluish
flickering screen.

Today the sprays of roses, mums,
carnations — red, orange, and yellow —
banked the upturned, silver shining
earth where you lay. *I trust my Jesus,*
you once told me. *I'm just a man.*
And cupped inside this darker day
I grieve, the claret mystery
of the cross, beside me here,
in hiding.