Elegy to a goldfish

I can’t remember when
my brother and I decided to kill you, small
fish with no school, bright and happy at the bottom
slipping through the gate
of your fake castle. I think it was winter. A part of us
aware of the death outside, the leaves
being burned up and the squirrels starving
inside the oaks, the sky
knocking its clouds into the ashtray of the city.
And it might have been me
who picked you up first, who
chased you around the clean bowl of your life
and brought you up into the suffocating
elevator of ours. And I want to say it was my brother
who threw you against the wall
like a drunk husband, the glow-worm inch of you
sliding down the English Garden
of wallpaper, and that it was me who raised my leg
like a dog, me who brought my bare foot
slamming down on your almost nothing ribs
and felt you smear like a pimple. Now that’s something
I get to have forever. That Halloween-candy-sized rage, that cough drop
of meanness. And your death, only
the beginning, the mushy orange autopsy
reminded us of mandarins, Navels, bloods, Persians
the sweet Valencia. And when our sister
who must have thought of you all day
came home to find the bowl
empty, looked at us, my brother and me
I remember we started to laugh. And then
it might have been me
though it could have been him, who thought to open
the can of tangerines, who pulled
one of the orange bodies out of the syrup, and threw it at her
this new artificial you, chasing her around the house
screaming Eat him! Eat him!
but it was me who held her down on her bed
and him who forced
her mouth open, and it was me who pushed
the sticky fruit into her throat
like a bloody foot
into a sock. You had only been gone for one hour
and yet the sky outside
turned black and red, the tree in the yard thrashed back
and forth until its spinal cord
broke, and my little sister, your one love, flashed white
and pulsed like neon
in a hospital, her eyes
rolling back into the aquarium of her head
for a moment, and in every country
countless deaths, but none as important
as yours, tiny Christ, machine of hope, martyr of girls and boys.

Matthew Dickman
Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, Vt, USA.
dickmanmatthew@yahoo.com
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