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Propping Up the Tombstone / Brief Glory

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PROPPING UP THE TOMBSTONE

The cemetery gate is old, rusty,
loudly protesting as we push it open,
the grass high, tangled with weeds,
small shrubs choke the winding path;
around us tombstones lean crazily,
some tumbled upon the ground,
their lettering worn, some dates and names now gone, forever;
we search a while,
hesitating,
suddenly finding it, face down upon the ground,
we heave it over, relieved,
the lettering is still sharp and clear
as if chiseled yesterday,
we prop it up,
securing it with stones and branches,
packing the earth firm around its foundations,
then tired, yet satisfied,
we step back.

We love you, Great-grandfather,
though we've never met.

Illustration by John Crawford

BRIEF GLORY

The little stone lamb
lies down upon its knees
and sighs,
"Our darling,"
the stone whispers,
"died age 3 months, 2 days,"
"earth to earth,"
"ashes to ashes."

Only this small monument remains
of her short life;
Like the Mayfly
or a bright shimmering bubble,
she was beautiful
for a moment.