Zacharia Heider

To the sister I never had

I will always regret the things
we could have shared:
the nights I’d stay awake
because you would not put the phone down –
these walls are very thin;
the days you – (mom) –
would make me play house
when I wanted to play Army Men;
the days that you had to play Army Men
  anyway.

I will miss seeing things your way
when I ask for advice;
  you: another lens
  you: a funny way of making life
seem like a movie in 3D;
your favorite color
  was always blue.

Sister, it breaks my heart
to know that I will never counsel you.
I will miss the night that you finally put the phone down
and shed your thousandth tear:
pounding,
  heavy,
  like the horns from Inception, I’d hear;
these walls are very thin.
I won’t show up at your door with
two spoons
one gallon –
triple chocolate –
and (500) Days of Summer – your favorite –
to stay up all night with boxes and boxes of tissues.
We will set the phone in our laps as we gorge.
You will complain about it going straight to your butt;
I say: at least you have one and
we laugh.

Each time you look
from bowl to screen
to phone to screen
to bowl to
phone I would
resist the urge to say:
He’s not calling you back.
Instead I would give you
three hundred calories of muscular flexion:
I will hug every last ounce of sadness out,
I will wring your pulp heart dry of every salt memory
until all you have left is a damp, wrinkled core
left in the sun to dry.
And you fall asleep on my shoulder.

I will never
be the first one to hear you scream
when the night terrors won’t leave;
be the first one to hold you,
be the one to dig through the attic, cluttered,
3' AM – half scared to death myself
just to find an old blankie or bear,
press it into your arms and
hush you back to sleep,  
it’s beautiful.

You are so beautiful.

So when I say  
that he doesn’t deserve you,  
I really mean it.  
You are exceptional,  
you are beyond words and  
I wish  
   O sister, how I wish,  
that you could be more  
than this poem.