

Little Big Man -- by Brian Kirk

That day you showed up at the house like a dress up murderer,
oversized raincoat, cap and boots, shotgun broken across your arm,
dog at your heels, scattering our cats. I was doing nothing much,
not yet working, sleepy, hardly dressed, under my mother's feet.
You wanted me to come along, but I refused. I'm not sure why –
distaste at the thought of killing, shame that I'd not been in touch
since school had ended? Sometimes I think that there was more –
I judged myself a better person. I'd moved on, become an adult
outside the stifling structure of the football field and classroom
while you were still a kid, playing the big man by killing things.
But that was the day you offered me a hand, the one I didn't take.
We could have met for drinks, gone to see bands we claimed to love,
but we didn't. I think you went to college, then dropped out
while I took off for London to escape the sense that I was failing.
I heard it from my mother on the phone, how they'd found you
in the shallows at the estuary, spent cartridges on the ground.