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THREE POEMS BY TAYLOR COLLIER

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The Dress You Cried "Amazing Grace" Into.

Your black dress tugging curtly at your hips, you stood high-heeled, arrogant as mercy. The dress's casual, flowing sag stunned me; you tip-toed gently, standing nose in the air—invincible with tears. It left me in love with you, that dress you bought the night your grandma died.

Easter Sunday

Wooden pews fade under the church's gloomy lighting system, another reason the preacher's sermon ought mention tithes, even if Easter. The crowds shuffle inside, the earliest plopping into seats at the back, the starched suits and florid dresses seem to glow with newness—the mark of the Creaster. The regulars have keen eyes for their kind, making a point of introducing themselves to the unfamiliar faces during congregational greeting, the kind of eyes that poke your chest and say, You haven't been here since last Easter, that reveal the heavy-handed absence of God and slump in disappointment when the sermon passes over weathered hymnals and funds for mission trips and vacation bible school and the poor sound system, the dim lighting. Those eyes that refuse to believe heaven holds a place for the likes of anyone who only comes to church on Easter, eyes that remind us Easter eggs are what it's all about, and bunnies are much more faithful than ghosts.

The Joneses'

Rain slaps the tin roof and throws a tantrum; the wind-wail lobs golf-ball-sized hail, thumping the windows,

and bends trees that snap
like bed-ridden mothers after giving birth
to stillborns.

It's too dark to hear anything,
else—not even the radio, the weatherman,
or his tornado warning. Coincidentally

I'm on my knees praying
for disaster— for a twister to implode
through town, taking out the Jones's house

with them still inside. I can almost hear them
suffocating, drowning in all their success,
but when the cameramen come to stand by

and film the cleanup, it'll only frustrate
me more, knowing full well
we'll never keep up.

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