

## On the Suicide of a Young Boy I Did Not Know

What do I do with this grief  
that is not mine, this story  
that is not a story but a real  
life abruptly gone? What do I do  
with these images of a boy  
I never saw who got the revolver  
his careful father kept unloaded  
by the bed, methodically loaded  
the cylinder with a bullet, a blank,  
a bullet, lay down on the cool green  
sheets of his parents' bed, put  
the barrel inside his small hot mouth  
and pulled the trigger? I did not know  
the boy. I only know today  
he would have turned fourteen and  
when my friend last spoke to him he was trying  
to decide which movie to see for his birthday  
and whether he wanted butter pecan or chocolate chip  
ice-cream cake. I only know his father found  
his body still warm, his mother  
can't say anything except that she will never go back  
into her bedroom, his brothers have stopped speaking  
to anyone. What can I do with these details

that do not belong to me? Bake them into a cake  
for the grieving family? Scrape the bowl clean  
of the boy's shocked blood, his last surly words  
to his father, last disappointing report card, his soft  
brown hair on the green sheets his braces his birthday  
his hand on the gun other hand on the pillow still bearing  
the curve of his mother's head? They do not want  
my cake. I have nothing to give them, no place  
in their despair, no right to this poem. But  
sorrow has no sense of propriety; it lodges  
where it pleases, needs little to thrive,  
and takes what it wants.

—for Kaitlin and Jorie

Jennifer Weinblatt