

Again

by Jericho Brown

You are not as tired of the poem
As I am of the memory.
A returning toothache
On either side of the mouth.
An ingrown hair beneath the chin.
Simple itch. Bruising scratch
And again I am bundled
In cousin Kenny's clothes
From last school year
My hand held by my mother's.
We walk as if the house behind us
Isn't warm enough
For my feet. In the dark
We make a few blocks
Around the one-story neighborhood
That I loved
Though nothing I've written
Tells you this.
I want to cut it out of me.
Because. Turns out it never mattered.
Right now my mother's asleep
On my father's chest.
His arm has landed
In the same place around her
Most of thirty years.
Give a man a minute.
She's asleep and I'm typing it
All over again. Everywhere
A man is shifting a bit
To make his woman comfortable
In his arms.
I should have told you this
Lines ago. We walked back
To the house we ran from.
Because.
My mother loves her husband
And his hands
Even if laid heavy against her.
I know you
Don't want to believe that
But give a man a minute.
We're not done.
My father loves his wife

And the shape of her body
Even if hunched in retreat,
Their son keeping up. I'm so sick of it—
Another awful father
Scarring this page too—
A bruising scratch.
We walked back
Through an open door.
And why don't I mention
He kissed my forehead
Before covering me
On the couch that was my bed?
Listen
And you can hear them
In the next room
Planning names for the youngest of us
Then making love loud enough
For the oldest to learn.