

The Boy

Marie Howe

My older brother is walking down the sidewalk into the suburban
summer night:
white T-shirt, blue jeans— to the field at the end of the street.

Hangers Hideout the boys called it, an undeveloped plot, a pit
overgrown
with weeds, some old furniture thrown down there,

and some metal hangers clinking in the trees like wind chimes.
He's running away from home because our father wants to cut his hair.

And in two more days our father will convince me to go to him— you know
where he is— and talk to him: No reprisals. He promised. A small parade
of kids

in feet pajamas will accompany me, their voices like the first peepers
in spring.
And my brother will walk ahead of us home, and my father

will shave his head bald, and my brother will not speak to anyone the next
month, not a word, not *pass the milk*, nothing.

What happened in our house taught my brothers how to leave, how to walk
down a sidewalk without looking back.

I was the girl. What happened taught me to follow him, whoever he was,
calling and calling his name.