

JENNIFER GIVHAN

Bloom

The boys next door are ignoring my son.

He doesn't understand they're not listening
on purpose: *Mom, they just can't hear me... I'll talk*

louder. He doesn't understand why

I'm crying: *Did I hurt your feelings, Mom?*
He's perched on the red brick wall that separates

our patches of yard, laughing at jokes he's not
part of. Calling out punchlines no one
asked of him. I try coaxing him in. Clouds

move low in the humid summer sky. Afternoon
monsoons. *Let's finish Harry Potter together*
I call, trying to remove the quaver from my voice

as he pulls greenish-black leaves from a tree
I've kept insisting to my husband is sick &
should be dug up, something brighter planted

but he always says there's nothing wrong: *It's just*
burning in the sun. Well, burning isn't normal, is it.
My boy brings me an impossible blossom

from his tree, for perhaps it was his all along,
tree that didn't even bud springtime when
all the other neighborhood trees were proud, colorful
with blooms. I've carried these hurts since childhood
like large plants in deep ceramic pots. I keep
them in the shade of a spare room that cannot get
enough light. I water them too often, & they sag.
I search our parched corner of the backyard
but cannot see where he found it—this gift
he's still enough to accept, & he's giving me.

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