

Finalist, Poetry

Gabriel's Coming  
By William Cushing

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Things did not turn out  
as perfectly as we had hoped. When  
the doctors  
extracted him  
from the womb, there he was

a twisted pretzel of  
a person, this child  
who was  
to be  
perfect,

shaking and bloody  
as a wounded bird and  
not much different:

from the bony shoulders, like broken wings,  
crooked arms splayed up  
to the curled hands  
that seemed jammed  
under a quivering  
chin  
attached, haphazardly,  
to a crooked head.

Hips  
perpendicular to  
a withered torso,  
legs running  
up the sides of a pruney chest—

all these deformities  
from blood that had  
clotted in the brain:  
a stroke. So,  
a malady  
of the elderly became  
his personal anomaly.

Blood soaked, crooked,

crying, and  
brain damaged:

this was how we greeted  
our son,

yet  
from those bodily barricades  
and  
out of that  
unquenchable panic  
came  
a boy who  
    did not interrupt a family,  
    did not join a family,  
but who  
created a family.



The Cushing Family on a recent excursion (posted with permission)