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Water

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The sound of giggles and laughter
Echoed across the rolling green landscape
My siblings and I were taking turns
Wielding our homemade bow and arrows
Shooting arrows against gravity
To pierce the cloudy evening sky
And provoke the Indian god Indra
Into sending showers of cool raindrops
Across our summer oasis

No raindrops came
Our attempts ceasing
After my mother shouted at us
To stop trying to reenact scenes
From Hindu mythology

One day a thunderbolt did come down
With such high velocity
That it hit my grandfather multiple times
Leaving him paralyzed from a stroke

Seeing the sad looks on my parents faces
I often visited my grandfather
Exuding infectious enthusiasm
Trying to make my parents and grandfather laugh

Each time I saw my grandfather, my Baba
We would play our tic-tac-toe game
He beat me a few times
On those occasions, I proudly told my parents
That Baba’s cognition was still present
Trying to awaken hope and elicit faint smiles
Then one day a tactless idiot
Claimed my Baba barely had a sliver of comprehension
This information shattered my spirit
And left me standing at a crossroads

Time seemed to have bifurcated
In the distance, life appeared to be rapidly accelerating
Except in my personal bubble
Where everything slowed down
Almost to the point of suspension
As I contemplated the paths that lay before me
One of avoidance
One of oblivion and fake energy
Or one of acceptance and action

The sharp wailing cries of my mother
Woke me from my trance
I saw the grief painted across my parents’ faces
And it dawned on me that as I stood at my crossroads
A life had literally passed me by

Since then, I have hoped to do something bigger than myself
And to make a positive impact in this world
Maybe it is out of regret
Or it is out of a desire to emulate my grandfather’s selflessness
Or maybe it is from seeking redemption

Either way, the next time a thunderbolt
Shoots down from the sky
I will not make the mistake
Of being paralyzed at my next crossroads

*Submitted as an entry in the 2014 Pharos Poetry Competition*