

# Oh, Brother Mine

by James Como (May 2016)

Consider Cain and Abel: allow the act  
as true and still you get it wrong, old stings  
of niceness-cum-nightmare. Fact.

Are they known, two such brothers who fit  
that mold? Fame sure, but game?

One good, fine, the prize, the other violent,  
neurons blown, the end of days, a lamentation.

Now consider *this* fact, soberly:

first act. Spokes from one axel,

and it shows, depending on the roll,

like when we robbed fried chicken

from the fridge at midnight (mother was not

amused, but father would greet us with

a wing of his own), and listened after

bedtime to *The Shadow* and *Straight Arrow*

and *Tom Mix* –“dig dirt, Tony!”

he would shout to his horse: “a horse, Joey,

named *Tony!*” He could watch baseball

later, *all* in for Johnny Mize.

One as sharp, the other as given to violence,

but he quicker of mind and canny, *and*  
daring, rescuing a one-eyed kitten on Third  
Avenue into the James Weldon Johnson  
Houses. Saving me too on Lexington:  
another story, with so much, so many more.  
Act two. Our mother died when we  
and she were too, too young, you see.  
The earth quaked. Fuses were lit, reveries  
ended, unsung. Do you see? So, later, he  
went at it, frenzy and rage, a wicked place.  
Yet on the way he would keep watch,  
steady, as a big brother should, and his better  
self would act. And much later still came grace,  
third act. So much for Cain and for Abel.

*Not* out of nowhere did he choose  
to return, a grandfather. We recovered  
secrets, affixing sweet memories and staying  
the wheel full circle, he caring, tender, passionate  
(of course): "Jimmy, Clinton won't even say 'God bless  
America'!" He prayed and was anointed.  
Only I and he knew all three acts,  
you see. And, loving him as I do,

I was not ready for this cremation.

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James Como is the author, most recently, of [here](#).

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