

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.

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

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