

Advent

by [Diane G. Scholl](#) in the [December 2023](#) issue

Neat in my red scarf, white shirt,
navy skirt for Assembly Day,
I'm the only kid whose grandmother
died last night. I'm pretty sure.
Early December, and I mump and mime
the words to carols with a dry,
understated mouth, without
conviction, with no joy, no greed
for Santa and the rest.

The weight of something new sits
darkly on my chest, fingers my windpipe,
lingers where my voice should be.
I'm a barren winter tree, leafless.

Someday I'll ride this through
to the other side of grief,
but now I'm waiting, tapping
time with one foot on the floor,
keeping my head up so no one can see.

The days grow short to Christmas;
that baby who'll be born is me,
sliding out of the world's rank sorrow
like last summer's fruit, a walnut
dropped by the roadside, windfall
in the world's fraught landscape.

Lucky break. Everything hurts
and promises so much—everyone
singing, the sky's bleak gray,
rhythm pulsing with no letup
and nowhere to hide.

Something to hope for;
nothing yet to say.