

Cruelty

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Where it begins,
nobody knows.

A student of mine
remembers tying her little brother
to a tree. He apparently escaped
and is alive today to tell the story.
She and I laugh about it now.

My younger cousin
killed himself at thirty—apparently
filmed the whole thing, gunshot
and all. A police officer,
he was known for snapping
the wrists of those he handcuffed.
Always in trouble at school,
he never listened. Later he was
diagnosed as deaf. Nobody knew.

Now the politics of the playground
turn a clown show into a horror film,
played out in the misshapen lives
of the poor, the brown, the other.
Only God knows why the world
still turns in its crooked little orbit,
heating up under a sun that is free
to set the ozone afire.