

Kahn Davison

Shhhhhhh...

My grandparents forbade
 anyone to talk about what happened
because things like that weren't supposed

 to happen to good Christian rooted families
like mine and when they did,
 they were buried and burned with the cross-dressing

uncle, the incarcerated nephew,
 and the love-child cousin. For nineteen years
everyone but me knew that my parents

 weren't sacrificed to cancer or victims of a car accident.
My grandfather shushed my questions
 like a toddler talking during church service.

My grandmother gave my inquiries
 the same stare that made me swallow
my gum in Sunday school.

 Other folks spoke of my mother with reverence
but didn't speak of my father at all.
 That was the first clue,

but it was too dull. I wanted to believe
 my parents were walking home from a blues show
when a mugger appeared, robbed, and shot

 them both, and I would grow up bold, avenge
their deaths by becoming the incredible Batman.
 That daydream lasted until I got to high school.

When grandmother passed during tenth grade with the secret
 still clinched between her teeth,
it felt like any chance to find out what happened

 departed with her. Four years would pass before
a newspaper article in an auburn chest
 would tell me a gospel no one else could.

The comfort of not knowing what so many people did,
 evaporated like holy water
on hell's door step. I closed my eyes and wept.