

Brian Dundas

Deal

The deal had been
I would get a place –
likely in a high-rise –
take the half-empty beer cases over,
buy a cat to purr in the quiet space.

We'd get all set,
and then we'd tell them.

So we lumped around a whole week
with pant-loads of knowing,
and it was like
there is no money for Christmas this year
each time we had to smile
at the pencils in their noses,
or tuck them into cold sheets
stuck to their stuffed bears.

On hearing, Matthew,
eleven,
nearly tore his hair out.

The eight year old, Julia, flickering
like her Minnie Mouse night light,
cried and laughed, and thought
it might be great to have two houses.

Then she cried again because
I would no longer be her father
(though I assured her I would)
and because everything was uncertain.

Like what a family is.