The Weight of Absence

Judy Katz

When you died our house sank deeper into the earth,
pressing on the roots of trees.
I could feel it sinking
as each visitor pushed open the front door,
laden with cakes and casseroles, the full weight
of their bodies—every muscle and tendon,
shinbone pelvis hips moving
down the hallway, moving past the closet
where your dresses hung, still with your smell,
moving into the living room where our father
sat low to the ground.

I had watched you grow smaller and smaller,
ice chips on your tongue.
And as the morphine took you
here and there, Paris and summer camp,
the lake at night—
I thought I understood:
lighter and lighter
you would become,
a lightness leading
to nothing.

But the house did not rise that day;
it sank.
No mass no matter
no thing in the bed
in the blankets
in your place.