

One-Act Plays

Nick Bertelson

When I see your name stashed in the obituaries
I am left to piece this Sunday back together,

watching the only play
you ever posted on YouTube

through my shattered iPhone screen,
as the real world glows wanly,

like sunlight in a nightmare where nothing happens
but I am still frightened. Thus,

half a shooter of vodka for lunch—
enough to make the tongue happy,

enough to get the bones plumb.
When we look to our heroes, we agree

and that matters. It's bad when you pray
for an accident, when you see no

allusion to death, no car wreck, no heart attack.
The obit's final line: "Make a donation

to your local theater." Because you were an actor,
after all, funny as all get out. So good at faking it

I wonder if the play ever ended.
Perhaps you walked from one spotlight into the next

—every room a set, every word
a memorized line. How exhausting

to find falling curtains all around you,
to hear gunshots in the chairs folding.