

DANIEL O'CONNELL

Anniversary, roughly

When my mother died, she left
each kid 5,000 dollars,
that's 30 thou total—
made me want to be an only child.
I put the inheritance into checking
to bring my balance to 4,500,
planned to let the money slip away slowly,
without noticing, into groceries,
bus fare, and a few big nights out.
A sort of secular memorial
to my long suffering mom

but that didn't seem right
so I decided to make
a drastic move of my own
across town to a better room,
sunk 1,400 for two month's rent into security,
thought maybe that's better than anything
to keep my hands off it—
keep my mother alive
in my mind in a sense.
I put the rest of the cash into a sock

and swore on her grave
that I'd never use the money
except for emergencies,
which, with her five flashlights
strategically placed throughout the house
and two 20-packs of TP in the basement and,
every Tuesday, generic brand spaghetti sauce
over Uncle Ben's minute rice, and 50 dollars in ones
in the freezer
for the last 50 years
was a way of honoring her
frugality, foresight, and maternal spirit
that sustained us all.

Of course, great ideas, from feudalism
to capitalism to communism to hiding

a money sock from yourself
eventually pass away, and so
my mom's five grand is gone.
I'm right back where I was
about this time last year
but—I'm sure you saw it already—
I was trying too hard, and for nothing.
You don't forget people who
you should have loved more.
They stay with you, like something
stuck in your teeth
and that weird sensation—almost like pleasure—
of trying to work the thing out with your tongue
is what meeting in heaven must feel like.