

TO ROSE-

1.

Never occurred to us that anything  
could go wrong. It seems nothing  
now could ever go right.

What could we have done? Nothing? Anything?  
Rabbit holes. Always something.  
Never knowing answers.

Afraid to try again, afraid to have  
to survive it all over,  
question our only choice.

2.

The baby on TV reminded us,  
if it had all gone by the plan,  
you would have been here soon.

Another December baby, just like  
your mom and me. We even  
thought maybe the same day.

Probably too much to hope for. (I wish  
I could take that back as soon  
as the thought left my brain.)

3.

Plans to tell everyone about you  
fell to pieces and we still  
are made to remember.

The pharmacy conspired to remind us.  
Even the post carrier  
brought memory to our door.

“We’re pregnant. (But mostly her)” the shirt said.  
And “Best big brother ever,”  
Another on the shelf.

4.

I want them all to know that you are ours.  
That you were everything.  
That you were all we hoped.

5.

Do you remember I would sing to you?  
Tell you I love you and your  
mom again and again.

I wanted you both to know you were safe.  
Everything outside our  
control broke my promise.

6.

We only bear hurting like this because  
we hurt like this together.  
Apart, I'd not survive.

7.

There've been moments of knowing I've only  
ever known with your mom: the  
instant she said your name

I knew that was your name: Rose. The moment  
I knew I wanted to spend  
all of my life with her.

8.

Sometimes a prayer escapes – force of habit.  
I only now believe in  
you. In her. All that's real.

9.

There's been no music. There have been no words.  
I don't know what I would say.  
Nothing would be enough.

The letter I tried to write never got  
past the first few words before  
I'd break down – unable.

Maybe now I can tell you – you were all  
we hoped. All we ever dreamed.  
We still hope. We still dream.

BIO: Brad Bailey is a writer and musician. His poem “Accusation” appears in Giant Robot Poems, and his stories have appeared in Kelp Journal, Moggie Noir, As You Were, and Revolt. He has an MFA from the Mountainview program at Southern New Hampshire University. Brad lives in Las Vegas with his wife, their son, and the best cat ever.