

Not It

“Not It!” we’d shout before a round
of backyard hide-and-seek,
the last to say it left behind
to count down in the dark

of covered eyes from ten to one,
from one to Ready-or-Not,
the Here-I-Come that comes too soon,
the day that turns to night

because the game’s gone on and on,
and now you’re It, you’re It,
and now you’ve always been alone
without a hiding spot,

with friends to find who can’t be found
because it’s late, too late
for anything but how the wind
makes ghost-chimes of the Not

as night turns day and day turns night,
and you’re not not the one
in grown-up clothes that don’t quite fit
who can’t stop counting down

from ten to one to Ready-or-Not
to Here-I-Come again
as night turns day and day turns night,
and you’re not not the one

who’s never not been running out
of breath the more you count
from ten to one to Ready-or-Not,
who’s counting backward now

from Here-I-Come to Ready-or-Not,
and you’re not not the one
in grown-up clothes that finally fit
who shouts “Not It! Not It!”

- Caitlin Doyle

(Published in *32 Poems, No. 40*)

Flannery at Andalusia

"Art transcends its limitations only by staying within them."
- Flannery O'Connor

Communion held the balance of her hours
between hard fact and harder metaphor,
Christ's body no less living than her own,
though living couldn't hurt him anymore.
She walked with metal crutches, limbs gone thin
from lack of use the sicker she became.
Her blood, unlike the wine the chalice bore,

was past all prayer, its cells immutable.
O Lord I am not worthy. Daily mass,
each echoing the last. *But only say the word.*
Her hair fell out in handfuls while the grass
above her grave-to-be, beside her father's,
grew, was cut, and grew. Pain pressed on her,
retreated, pressed. The grace that made it pass

for long enough to let her write a little
in the morning meant she must be blessed,
meant each right word absolved her for the way
her life kept quiet what her work confessed:
No sin was more original than hers,
creating lives that couldn't be redeemed
except in language only she possessed.

- Caitlin Doyle