In Remission

When she was ill I was   
a tree that would not be spoken to,

though the wind howled me down.  
I was a wave that

gathered force under a storm,  
spume effervescing, spilling

in the luminous bolt;  
bold and unafraid.

I was a cat  
that strolls home after you watch a car

roll heavy on its spine.  
A single rose that buds

through winter, though its leaves  
are eaten by frost.

When she was ill I was a bison,  
bullet blasted through my hide,

head down, charging at the gun.  
I was a child who goes out to play

despite the bruises on her face  
that did not come from the playground.

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But now that she is well  
Now that she is well

I am bent  
like a tree that is rotted in its roots.

Collapsed like a wave that has travelled  
too far, and fades before the shore.

Weak as a sickly kitten  
struggling to stand on straggly legs.

Crumpled like the early crocus, beaten  
by sleet when hoping for the sun.

I am as spent as the bison fired on till he runs  
no more; muzzled corpse alive with guzzling flies.

Like a battered child I offer up my  
face for the next hit.

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I guess I am all of us who,  
for fear of being caught

unaware, flinch at the shadow  
of a hand that might, or might not, be there