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Enemy

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Brown: Enemy

ENEMY

**MICHELLE
CHAN BROWN**

Genial. Harmless as a new hat.
That is the way of plagues.

The father said: *What smells so good?*
The mother said: *Nothing ventured.*

Nothing demanded. Nothing fed
or cooked. The plague was modest,

refusing the royal "we";
the plague dispelled myths

like candy shell. Not metaphor,
but meat and bone. Not religion,

but man. Lo, the plague was traditional.
Notes the anthropologist: *Traditions kill.*

He held the baby on his knee. He built
the built-in bookshelf. By god, he was lively.

First, the flora fell. Later the animals.
Grief came organic to the children.

The girl wrote: *Only the dog is noble.*
The family kept pulling for peaches.

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They'll eat off the family tree.

History told them: no one ever starved
for love. The mother darned

old flags for their cadavers.
After a time, they grew accustomed

to the maggots' fancy footwork.
Each had been told: *you carry the world.*

Their shoulders were thin as saplings.
The children stroked the sofa's stems.

Laughter filled their backpacks.
It is always almost the same.