

# Heart of a Poet

*by* Deborah Oster Pannell

He sneezed  
Hit the wrong button  
Didn't mean to kill him,  
but he did  
Held onto me then, crying  
and could not stop  
I feel so awful, he sobbed  
He was asking for mercy  
And I meant to say, "yes,  
I will spare your life,"  
but I hit the kill button  
instead  
It was an accident  
Honey, it's just a game  
It's virtual, I mouthed  
But the words  
would not come  
when I needed them most  
It was all too real  
to him,  
the cruelty  
He had seen it before,  
in movies  
in other games  
in the eyes of bullies  
at school  
And now, he was one of them  
My son is marked  
by the tragedy of loss  
which has only magnified  
an already tender heart  
He feels the pain of others

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and the harshness of injustice  
in a way far beyond his years  
And I imagine the crown  
of his innocence  
slipping down  
over his eyes,  
falling to the ground  
shattering  
the quiet safety  
of my arms  
around his little body  
He will play the game again  
and create a new ending  
to make it all right  
I haven't the heart to tell him  
The pain will continue

