

the other son

every christmas
 my dad travels halfway across the united states
 from the burned-out little mill town on the hudson
 where we all grew up
to visit the two sons he likes
in austin texas.

my dad has three sons in austin texas
 I'm the other son.

for fifteen christmases he's been coming to town
 like a bad santa
never tells me he's coming
makes no effort to see me
he used to call me after he'd already been here for a week or so
and say
 I'm leaving in a couple of days
 so if you want to see me
 you'd better get over to your brother's house tomorrow
but he doesn't even bother to do that anymore.

strange as it might sound
I've noticed that I always feel different when he's in town
 even if no one tells me he's here
it's hard to explain but
 I always feel kinda off
 sad for no reason
 angry for no reason
 defeated and tired
and all I wanna do is sleep.

when I was a kid
 my dad hated christmas
 and every year
 he found a new way to ruin it for me
I guess old habits are hard to break.

I gave up on him
 and my relationship with him
a long time ago
but his christmas trips to austin still affect me.

I'll never understand
how a father can travel halfway across the country
every year
and pretend he only has two sons in this town
when he has
three.