

I am the younger brother

by Steven Deutsch

The envelope arrived today.
You penned
969 for 696
and that simple error
from a math prodigy
Sent the letter drifting homeless
for months.
I wonder if you did it with intention.

The Times published your obituary last month.
you died somewhere exotic—
Chile, wasn't it—at a mountaintop observatory
where you studied the collision of distant galaxies.
Of Brooklyn, you'd tell
friends and family
“It's like living in a closet—
most nights,
the sky seems starless.”

In the obit photo,
you looked the same skinny malink
you did at 8,
with your nose crooked, from the time
I caught you with a right cross,
and Mom's straggly hair
I could not imagine why women

found you irresistible, but they took
to you like bears to a hive.
You never felt the need
to swat a single one of them away.

Was there an award you did not win?
With a mind more at home
on Icarus—whose pale blue blink
takes 9 billion light years to reach us,
than it ever was in the tiny apartment
on Remsen Avenue we called home.

You sent a yellowed clipping
from the Brooklyn Eagle, circa 1959—
with a photo of two young teens,
dressed for fame and fortune
in jackets and ties that were too tight
holding a miniature Tesla Coil.
The headline below touted
“Twins, Age 12, Win Science Fair.”

Just that fragile photo
in an envelope
that might have travelled a million miles,
and for a second I’m forced to sit
as gravity releases me
so I might travel back in time.