To commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the White House, The National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance and Candlewick Press have published *Our White House: Looking in, Looking Out*, a collection “created by 108 renowned authors and illustrators.” I am honored to be one of those invited to contribute to the book. Below is the poem I contributed to this collection.

Mary Todd Lincoln Speaks of Her Son's Death, 1862

> When Willie died of the fever, Abraham spoke the words that I could not: "My boy is gone. He is actually gone."

Gone.
The word was a thunderclap, deafening me to my wails as I folded over his body, already growing cold.

Gone.
The word as a curtain coming down on eleven years, hiding toy soldiers, circus animals, and his beloved train.

Gone.
The word was poison, but poison that would not kill, only gag me with its bitterness as I choked on a prayer for my death.

Abraham spoke the words that I could not: "My boy is gone. He is actually gone." And I am left with grief that when spoken shatters like my heart.