

Ode to Mom

The sound of plastic needles,
crossed legs folded
and her persistent, squinting gaze.

The third, fourth pair of glasses
her frames, her frame
another Diet Coke beside her.

The way she holds her spoon, hand unsteady,
or the hearts she tucks into my name:
Rosebud with wide *Ss* and round *Rs*

A loud a-choo
cut by a belt of laughter,
A playful skirmish down the hallway.

I am trying to capture all of it.

The softness of her hair,
the warmth of her morning smile,
the slow, gentle sensation of her embrace.

Her hands, buried deep in her pockets.
smoothing out a puzzle,
gripped to the wheel— forever ten and two.

Even the one-finger typing,
the click of the ringer that drives me mad,
or statements dressed as questions.

These are the priceless pieces I will long for,
search for in my memories

I am so much her daughter,
sensitive and stubborn,
almost always early,
drawn to sunsets and coastal air.

I am with her now to note these joys
These wonders I carry and hold so dear
A fiercely loyal, loving wonder—
my mother.

To you

Tonight I am recounting
the moments we shared,
the secrets told in droves.
You are carrying a chest of me.

Memories are either coming
as blurred half-frame negatives
held up to light for less than
a second
or slow motion movies.
I could fill them in but
I know memory is a
 dubious thing,
I have already lost so many pieces of you.
I do not know when.

There were tens of thousands
of minutes–
probably more–
though, they mostly blend
some time period
loosely defined
With you.

Maybe one day
I will go through
the real box of letters,
scrap pieces of paper,
photographs,
all the tokens I keep
of life-love.
I will see your face
or written word

and remember
a dozen, a hundred, small miracles.

Maybe afterwards, I will open up
that journal,
skip through
a dozen, hundred, recast trials
to the time we drove through Upstate
when winters seams burst with spring.
Our nights were so tender and
I looked at you as the future.
I will want to remember
what still remains.
I may say of it all, *youth*.

I do not regret it.
I am not timid to speak of it,
even now, young still,
the real respun into
what I am able to recall.
So much of it feels a story,
stories no longer mine,
even as they burned
even though at times they felt
a shade of joy just my own
an expansive goodness
apart from anything else
I'd known before.

I might not hear from you anymore
but I still wish you well.
If we could speak I would love to
ask you about some things...
like did your brother finish school?
and did he propose?

how is your mother's health?

is she still working?

And did you move to the town in New Mexico you
talked about so often?

I hope you're making art.

pursuing art.

I hope so in the same way

I hope in time

the hurt softened into something
resembling

understanding.

I can imagine a day when we cross paths again.

we could take a walk

at the cadence I never found

quite natural

and we could go through

a trove of what was or

simply meet, as we are.

I hope you won't mind

I like to keep the box

we agreed best to bury

on that phone call

I sat balled for

on the floor.

I keep it on a high shelf.

No, not the one mailed back

with every remnant-relic of me,

but the one that tells a story

once I wind it, it

keeps the ways I wound,

stumbled around you,

made an existence to fit what was,

and in its crumbling
saw the pieces I'd remake—
how you changed me.

I forget so much was yours

The artists
The phrases
The way of pausing, waiting
The affinity for a certain spots in town
The socks I never returned

I deleted that playlist so long ago
it was part of the work
of conscious forgetting,
and even though I own the your/our records
they already feel mine.
Over time, I am bound to forget
so much of what was,
and in decades, you may call me,
stranger.

But tonight
I indulged a past of us
when we was all I knew,
all I wanted to know.
When we stood outside your gray apartment building
wearing thick coats, sweating
after going between outside and in
wearing squeaking boots and
needing to buzz the door open
again and again.
You closed the car door after the last package
was tucked in just right
and we were so close.
I can still close my eyes and

glimpse yours
they are neither yours anymore,
nor mine.
I remember how I ran into them,
right into
a free open horizon, so certain.

There was pain, of course,
so much of it with us,
strain
so much of our burden,
but I know that we were once
only speaking in
tenses of forevers
and baring everything.

She was so entirely yours,
but you are probably gone
as is she.

I remember her.

Flight With Closed Eyes

Tell me Mother Wind,
where am I going?

Are you taking me to highest mountain
or to sleeping valley?
Am I being dropped into endless water or shifting horizon?
I think I am standing among tall grasses but
sometimes I wonder, Mother.
There is so little I have seen.

Would you whisper it, Mother?
Would you tell me when you
tug my wrist?

I feel you coming.
I am reaching up arms extended,
my weight on my toes,
ready to feel your pull.

But I am afraid mother.
I am closing my eyes, knowing,
this is when you reach me and this is how.

I am waiting for you.
But I am afraid mother...
where are you taking me?

Daughter

She was seven
hems hanging over her,
enough light to see the outline
of her tracings on the popcorned wall.

The footsteps.
Fire alarms.

She touched
speckled horse friend,
collage of buttons,
near Pooh Bear sticker.

She played a game:
Step there,
safe.
Step there,
closer.
Ball.

It was only a matter of time,
game of seconds,
sometimes minutes.
She did not count it—
only felt it pass
in frozen breath.

Then sliding door,
and hard, hurt,
wet, shame,
or mostly only trembling.

Silence and damp cheeks
a reply
to that something of that day.