

THIRTY
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MOTHER

Mother, you deserve someone to talk to.
 You deserve someone to listen to you, the gift of open ears and heart.
 An honest assessment with emotional involvement.
 Someone who can remain objective or latitudinous in their discretion.
 You deserve a scheduled time to say the things you'd say to us,
 if we weren't given to exploding and corrupting your intention.
 You deserve the time to your own space
 and considered effort toward your own mind when always at the dinner table.

You are enraptured nervous energy for others,
 wrapped down in strife and avoiding strife,
 a knotted noose around your esophagus,
 a clattering of plate against fork making you jump and cry.
 Not weeping, never weeping,
 just a quick indeterminate flash across your eyes,
 welled in silent suppressed honesty.
 Your love escaping in all directions.
 Mother, you put yourself aside completely in the care and feeding,
 hot foreheads, skinned knees, adolescent coldness,

and body sacrificed for the culture,
 and reclaimed at 40 and you didn't even want it anymore.
 If not for nursing, warming, rocking
 what good is your slackening chest
 and why bother lifting a task
 if it's not a small child who needs consoling,
 or a good look into their eyeball.
 You're drenched in our own sweat and happy.
 You're sleepless due to us
 and comfortable in the displacement of self and mattering.

You've rolled off tongue-loads of whatever makes you happy
 instead of having an opinion
 and you've blamed my father for every misstep.
 You blame him now for every cascade of pain and longing.
 You have no hobbies.
 You left the box of it all free on the garage sale table.
 You did not dance at the weddings
 since there were no small restive children to entertain and cuddle closely in the noise.

Mother, I remember your wet warm skin in the swimming pool,
 being cradled in my dirt and reveries, my running monologue in backyard rejoicing
 under just the sun that points to life's perfections
 and the love of God that's never left you.

Mother, it is your turn for the thousandth time,
 and maybe you won't take it, turn in your ticket and fold your hand.
 I don't know where you lost your first tooth or your virginity.
 I don't know what you dream about.
 I empty pat an email, a shoulder, a small talk us to the fitting conclusions.
 Departure. Safe drive home.
 Arrival. Welcome, welcome.
 How are you? Sacrificed completely?
 How are you? Lost to overthinking?
 How are you? Ready to release your grip on all this baleful suffering and stacks of
 sorting for
 disposal? If your kids would just take their shit and leave then you wouldn't have the
 watchful
 job to do,

and without a job to do, you will open your mouth to an echo
 of the life river passing swiftly
 and your cast off secrets in the rushes,
 failures to thrive and desperate lamb blood protection for this offspring.
 42 and still forgetful. 45 and unapproachable. 36 and tech support.

You've made your life a monument of guilt and featherdown.

You deserve the manufactured tools to cease emotional flooding.
 You deserve a pelvic floor.

You deserve all that my arms could hold but,
 we in generational stance,
 won't release our loads into the arms of others.
 We won't put our homeless load down untended for any imbecile to steal.

Mother, daisies in your young hands at the altar,
 ring around the collar dish pan hand lies strewn like petals down the aisle.
 You've signed all of our permission slips in time for the adventure,
 now start yours,
 flipping yourself like a pancake and it would be the best meal.

The warm running butter and griddle heat of action,
wood breath and lumberjack labor.

No one has worked harder than you have and the only one cut down in the end is you.
The family tree, a hot hatchet scalding, a dewy morning, deep rooted strength and
wonder.

Mother, I'll see you ever from the doorway,
leaving a blanket of rumination wrapped around your shoulders,
the one you wouldn't let me take from you.

Mother, my unspeakable beauties were cast like stones
from your bedtime stories and suburban home cooked meals.

We endeavor to stop the elderly from helping any further,
but they do not believe God loves them at rest.