

Holly E. Dunlap

**Morning**

winds turn the leaves  
to their underbellies

and my mother's yard  
is green  
this time of year

with hints of lavender  
rosemary  
yesterday's rain

flip squirrel  
leftover seeds

of my thoughts hanging upside  
down from trees  
feet gripping

## Needmore Road

You peer into darkness  
listening to river sounds;  
"It's really high tonight,  
way over the banks."

But you keep staring at it  
until the sun comes up,  
like it's gonna go away

talking about the tree  
that used to be over there  
growing above the water,  
how you climbed it.

About walking through the river,  
about being there with  
Michael and Holly

and how this mountain laurel,  
(you point), and that rhododendron  
and that kudzu weren't there before.

You tell me how you signed a petition  
to keep them from paving the road  
next to this river.

And how you rode bikes 6 miles  
down this road with your neighbor.

How you want to stay here  
get so drunk you  
sleep in a hollow log.

**Don't make me do it. (or Ode to Someone)**

I want to take your face  
and smoosh it up  
like putty, soft clay

watch your features change  
listen to the splotch of  
gums against teeth

lips touching nose  
breath becomes a whistle.

I want to twist your earlobes  
pinch your cheeks till they're  
purple.

Bite your lips till they  
bleed.

If you have any sense at all  
you'll know you need to listen  
and not say a word.

**If I could,**

I'd write a letter to you  
with my feet that says,

"I wrote this with my feet,  
because my hands aren't good enough  
for you."

but then again, neither are my feet.

OR

If I could,  
I'd write a letter to you  
with my feet that says,

"I wrote this with my feet  
because my hands are too good  
for you."

but then again, so are my feet.

## Single mom living with parents

We are whooping it up  
around here, like a nursing  
home on Lawrence Welk night.

We know how to have a good time:  
big hair, bright suits, matching makeup  
and gospel choir for a full hour.

We shake our groove things and  
laugh at ourselves, knowing how we look.

When it's time for Antiques Road Show,  
we all wind down, and when the yard guy comes in, we are a bit  
embarrassed.

We're not that old;  
it's just that sometimes we have to stop watching the bad news.

Sometimes we have to dance with the baby.  
Sometimes we just have to laugh at the funny outfits and the cheesy music.  
Sometimes it's better to live the strange, the obtuse.

## demented

37 years later,  
my voice  
is a mother voice.  
I have a care.taker. face.

Glowing in the dark means  
something new now,  
and “Mommy” means me,  
in that perfect, precocious way she speaks  
of her Pops at only 2 years old:  
“Mommy, we need to help Pops.”

Pops became a character  
from a short story I wrote years ago:  
He might as well smoke cigars  
and play chess naked,  
think the teenage girl next door is his wife, but it's  
me he forgets, my daughter too.

His dementia changed his face, his eyes especially...  
hollow eyes-  
and sometimes I like to  
pretend they are still full and  
he can still be him, and I can be the old me.

Mom became almost blind, and deaf.  
She jokes she's Helen Keller.

I am cataclysmically changed  
...have ugly, patchy  
yellowed wings  
emerging,  
flying for them.