

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.