

## Photo Albums

### I Wonder If I Ever Really Loved Your Father

“I wonder if I ever really loved your father.”

They had been divorced 40 years

I knew there was no love at the end

But still I guess I had assumed that at one point in time

There had been a real passion a real flame

Mom had been reminiscing as we drove our way back

From the Geode Grotto in Jasper

Amongst the rolling hills of southern Indiana

I think this countryside always reminded her

Of her long past childhood deep in Missouri

She had been telling me of the other men who had sought her hand

Though I think she was speaking more to herself

Then meaning to share any secrets with her son

There had been many it seemed

No surprise, she had been a beauty in her time

Naturally blonde, trim of waist and full figured

Smarter than they expected her to be

I'm sure she was the torment of many a post war young man's dreams

She spoke of one, I don't recall his name

Said he was so very nice but oh so very homely

And then there was Jim, she said he persisted time and again

“I've lost touch with him, I wonder if he is still alive

I don't believe he ever left home"  
She mentioned a few others, not with regret, but just to recall  
And perhaps to wonder at what might have been  
But I know, love or not, she wanted what my father offered  
He was foreign, even exotic, intelligent beyond measure and deeply driven  
He had to give her was what most mattered, a way out of Rolla  
To avoid the future her parents and the world had plotted for her  
Settle down, raise kids, maintain the status quo of mid-century America  
He provided her the chance to escape, get an education, pursue her dreams  
Had she stayed in Missouri she would never have been happy  
Still, I thought, as I pondered the final days of my own failing marriage  
If some part of her wondered how things might have been different  
Not if she had married Jim but if she had waited to find  
A love that would last and mature, and carry and nurture her from beginning to end

### **When I Die**

When I die don't you dare  
Put my name on a sticker  
In Memory Of  
Splashed across your car window  
To be read by strangers  
As they idle behind you stuck in traffic  
A captive audience to that  
And all the other tacky signs  
You have chosen to display  
Baby on board or your stick figure family  
I probably didn't like any of them  
And certainly not

My other car is a Tardis  
Or the feel good slogan  
Of your politician of the day  
Even if you have a graphic  
For the Grateful Dead  
Hair made up of roses  
Or lightning through its head  
While that might be a good joke to play  
I don't want to be remembered that way  
When I die please just take my ashes  
And scatter them in the wind  
Put some out to sea  
And keep a few apart to be stashed  
In the deepest corner of your heart

### **At Your Funeral**

It wasn't until I spoke at your funeral  
That I came to fully appreciate  
The friendship we had  
I had no prepared remarks  
Though I had thought about it a lot  
But I like to speak off the cuff  
Winging it brings out the most real thoughts  
Allows the ideas that suddenly spring up  
To come forth and be heard  
I don't get flustered with all eyes on me  
It makes me realize the responsibility  
I have to make sure  
That my words bare truths

At your funeral

I came to understand our connection

When I thought of how much time we spent together

When I rarely left the house, sunk in depression

How we drove together to New Hampshire to meet your father

And not just because he could teach us

How to role a joint with just one hand

But to learn something of his life

And the forces both kind and cruel

That had shaped him and you

At your funeral

I recalled helping to move your grandmother's treasures

From her apartment in Cleveland Circle

I was surprised to see a photo from that day

Part of the slide show of memories

It gave some context the stories I shared

With those who had only known you later

I recalled also knowing your mother

How she said once 'your friends sure do cough a lot'

But she still allowed us to sit in the basement

Smoke all the pot we could lay our hands on

With her too we were perhaps not so different

As she sat upstairs with her vodka and tonic

We lived life our way and she in hers

And perhaps most important

Sherene and I recalled that we were

The first two you choose to come out to  
Driving along on the Fresh Pond Parkway  
In your vintage unheated Volkswagen Beetle  
At the time it didn't seem a big deal  
Only later did I understand  
How hard it must have been for you  
To trust in us and bare your soul

At your Funeral  
I realized how grateful I was  
That we had reconnected the last few years  
Social media for all its flaws  
Can rekindle relationships long lost  
Sure you unfriended me once  
But we talked and made up as friends really should  
But still it was only when you died  
When I spoke at your funeral  
That I really realized  
That we had always been closer  
Then either of us ever knew

### **They Tore Down My Childhood Home**

They tore down my childhood home  
Almost the moment we moved out  
This after stopping by to check it out  
When it was still in my mothers name  
They didn't know friends and I had spent the night  
Dropped acid and roamed about the place  
They were shocked to see us as they let themselves in

Mother daughter and their realtor  
Yet we were the ones who apologized and made ourselves scarce  
Though not before ogling the beautiful teenaged girl  
None of us could have known then  
That years later one of us would marry her  
To this day they are still together

They tore it down and built a McMansion  
As was becoming the way in Lexington  
Money moving in and remaking the town  
It had seemed to me big enough for a family of four  
Especially after my parents added two rooms  
So my sister could have a space of her own  
And eventually giving my mother a chance  
For a fresh start when after the divorce  
The master bedroom just didn't fit her  
But I guess for a family of two  
What was fine for us for them just wouldn't do

The yard had always seemed huge to me  
Swing set, sandbox, plenty of room to run  
And several fruit trees, I think it had been an orchard once  
Though I hated the ritual of picking up the fallen fruit  
Would rather have apple fights the bruises be damned  
I've never forgotten the summer we let the backyard go  
I thought it was done as a treat for us kids  
A chance to pretend we lived in a jungle  
Though years later mom told me it was just because  
For that one year my father refused to mow  
His way of protesting against what he saw

As the arbitrary mandates of the suburban lifestyle

I drive down Gleason Rd each time I am near  
Gone is the circular driveway that provide a track  
To ride our bikes in endless loops  
To test our endurance or just pass the time  
In those days there had been kids everywhere  
As we were the last of the baby boomers  
But each time I go back now it all seems so quiet  
And everything even the McMansion so very small  
And I am reminded you can't go home again  
My mother she was wise, never wanted to return  
I thought I did even though I had spent years  
Burning down the remainders of my childhood  
No different I guess than the folks who came along  
And tore down my childhood home

### **Her Photo Albums**

Her photo albums  
Real pictures to be touched and felt  
Capturing her every moment  
A lissome youth  
Beautiful upright and strong  
Ready to take on the world  
A traveler of distant lands  
A loving mother  
A devoted friend  
It was all there right up to the end

She couldn't have known  
When she pasted the last one in  
That this would be the final memory  
Held to paper forever  
A reminder to us all  
Of how she lived  
Of what she had been