

THE MOTHER LOAD

These poems are from a suite dealing with adult-child estrangement - i.e. a phenomenon becoming alarmingly commonplace in today's world when an adult-child walks away from his or her parent or parents, often with no explanation - sometimes for months, sometimes for years, sometimes forever. They are composite poems - made up of fictional circumstances, bits of news-stories, and some autobiographical particulars.

DO-OVER

Say I could go back in time, just a few months
Say I could be better at reading the clues
Say I was hyper alert, really paying attention
Say I heard the notes in your voice I should have
Say I was able to reach across space and touch
your hand
Say, you felt my hand touch yours and you paused
Paused and considered what you were doing
and said instead, something else
Something like, I don't know - just something
different than what did get said
Or written, because nothing was ever said, was it?
It was all in writing, never stated

Say, everything went back to the way it was on
the Civic Holiday
Why that day ? Because, as far as I remember
We were all okay then, no-one had been
banned from seeing anyone
I didn't know I'd never get to talk to you again
Say the unimaginable had never happened

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HEAVY DUTY MOURNING - IN ADVANCE

I knew I would be a heavy-duty mourner,
one unable to let go of those I love easily
But I didn't realize that some of that grief
would manifest itself for people who
still breathe
Whose choice to leave me while we
both still walk the earth
has cut me deeper than any other loss I
can recall
Especially as I don't understand her need
to tear the fabric of our love
without explaining the rending, nor the
sudden-ness of same
Just one day, ripping herself and her family,
—specifically my grandsons—clean away
As if they had never been a part of me, as
if she hadn't either

Does it have anything to do with the man in
her life? Her husband? I can't bring myself
to think of him as a son-in-law now that he
won't speak with us either
A man I thought we knew well, that we
loved too, or at least I thought we did
But now, I wonder...was he faking his
affection and respect for us the whole time?
Everything becomes suspect, once something
like this occurs
And nothing remains the same - I don't trust
any of my original suppositions
Can't take certainties for granted anymore;
it's a sad way to live.

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SAID THE TOYS TO THE WRAPPING PAPER

"Psst...you there with the Pooh Bear characters all friendly and marching about with balloons and all —what's the deal? I see scissors and tape just resting by the bag on the table but *they* never do anything until the last minute and we've been here a long time"

Eeyore speaks for all of them on the paper,
"Oh, don't worry about me...it's never a good thing to be left out and we're going to be left out, see?"
The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles strain against their packaging, muttering amongst themselves...
Finally, the cheeky one - Raphael - shouts out,
"What ? What are you saying about being left out?
Who's going to be left out, donkey? It is the donkey dude saying that nonsense, isn't it?"

"Now, now—" wise old Owl chimes in from the paper
"There's no need to be rude turtles...you are turtles, I take it, yes?" For some long moments, it is quiet.
Now another TMNT, the one with the purple mask, Donatello, says, "Yeah, we're turtles, and ninjas, and we talk...can you dig it?" More silence.

Then the venerable bear speaks, "Oh dear," Pooh sounds distressed. "I don't know what to do. This has never happened to me before. We're supposed to go to a child's birthday party and, and, you're supposed to come with me...I mean us...there's a whole bunch of us...there's me and Piglet and Roo and Tigger and..."
"Pooh - it's okay, they don't need to know all that," Owl says gently. "But what are we going to do?"

It was a conundrum, that was for sure - and no-one, not the toys, and not the wrapping paper, had the faintest idea of how to cope with this turn of events.
They were all set to go to a tiny boy's birthday party when all of a sudden—
They weren't going anymore.
Had the party been cancelled? No, not that they could tell...it was most peculiar.
It seemed the people who were taking them to this festive occasion had been uninvited.
They'd never heard of such of thing --

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WHEN THE ANGER COMES ON (because sometimes you need to write it out...)

The revenge comes over me in a wave, like surf
It is surprising at first, but then not so much
I am watching a movie called "Rage" and it's
really bloody and I can't stop looking at it
When I started watching it, I found myself
thinking that there's way too much of this kind
of crap on
And that I watch way too much of it - that it's
affecting me - either making me want to kill someone
or that I'm becoming just numb to it, but maybe it's neither.

Then, it's right up in my face - and I realise I am
crazy angry that this horrible rage has been
simmering just below my calmness all along.
But really? I am fucking ready to tear my kid's
head off her shoulders.
That's right—the girl I keep trying to woo, keep
trying to understand, and keep telling I'm here
for her, anytime she's ready to talk, I'll be ready
to listen—that one.
Sometimes I can feel the unreasonableness
of the whole situation filling me up like poison gas
and I know if I let it out of my mouth, I will start
screaming and I won't stop.

How can she still be doing this to us, to me?
Six months gone, half a year...the baby will
be one next week - that baby who I don't
know at all and who would probably make
strange if either his grandfather, his aunt, or I,
tried to pick him up.
Not to mention the other two - those darling
boys who are old enough to remember us.
What has she told them about the people
who love them so much but who disappeared
suddenly from their lives?
Did she tell them we don't love them anymore?
Did she tell them we moved away?
Did she tell them we died?
What?

I can't ever share this writing with anyone; I know that
but I need to put it down, or I will go insane.
I think there are parts of me that are already over the line.

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IT'S NOT ALL THAT UNCOMMON

So this estrangement thing, this being banned from seeing your child, your grandchildren by said child ...

I've just recently learned via my other child, who learned it from her psychologist, that it's a more commonplace happenstance than one might think

At first, I thought that meant it might be more easily remedied; I mean if it happened with such startling regularity
Perhaps those who deal with such things have learned some devices, have perfected some advices, you know?
She did tell daughter number two, the younger, that it would likely be a bad idea to do anything to exacerbate the situation

The therapist's suggestion was that daughter number two continue to act as if everything was still alright, keep buying and sending presents and cards
Perhaps even write her sister a letter to say how wrong she feels this separation is and how she wants her to know that her door will always be open, she will forever be there, loving her, ready to accept her back.

This goes against the grain of anything the daughter who received this advice would usually even listen to, let alone hear
But with a voice laced with tears, regret and not in small part acceptance, I heard her say, she realised the verity of this solution.

And I, I saw and heard it too...there is nothing to be gained by trying to figure out if something is wrong with the estranged one.
That had been our original intention; no doubt that would drive her even further away
However, we *do* love her; we need her to know that above all else, and we want the boys (my grandsons, her sister's nephews) to know that too.

My heart cracks apart every time I even consider
those little boys
But I must admit, as time grows longer since I've
seen my daughter, as recalcitrant as I find
her behaviour, my heart aches for her as well
For the girl, the woman, she used to be
To where has that person disappeared?
Is she gone forever?
Does she think we are as awful as she seems
to think we are?
What, if anything, can we do to change her mind?
My tears, they seem to know no end.