

Grief

She had Alzheimer's before she died.
But she never forgot me.

She was so surprised to see me every time I walked into her room
And as her eyes lit up, I saw the truth about what she felt about me.

She loved me more than anything.
But she has left the world.

Gone.
Where I can only see her in my mind.
Only drum up the sound of her voice with the longing and the push of my will.

I walk down the sidewalk and picture her next to me.
Pushing her purple stroller;
with a very small stuffed monkey she kept, whose arms wrap around her handlebars.

I wish I could hear her say my name.

I am so afraid to die,
I don't want to be separated from the memory of her.

The night she died I dreamed I was 91.
I lay on my death bed drifting away;
I looked to my left,
and she was sitting by my bedside.
I was so afraid.

I didn't want to die;
my mind scraped and clawed against my fate.
And when I looked into her eye's tears were streaming down her face.
She was suffering.
She was not there to comfort me.
She was not there to take me to heaven.
She was there to suffer **with me**,
because she didn't want me to be alone.

I was the last person to talk to her
I put my hand on her knee and told her I loved her
I left her room to meet my family in the parking lot
She was dead by the time I reached the end of the hallway
The last thing she heard on earth was "I love you"

My Homeless Friend

Your picture is in a frame.
But I haven't hung it on the wall.

I picture us sitting in front of Starbucks every day.
Listening to Nina Simone before I left New York.
Each sharing a headphone.
When she sang "I Loves You Porgy" you always cried.

You said Nina's ghost spoke to you at night when you slept in the park.
You always joked that you were like a crazy pirate shaman.

We talked for 100s of hours and smoked what seemed like thousands of cigarettes.
I gave you money often, but it hurt you tremendously to take it.
Receiving was so hard for you.

We never talked about you being Black or Trans.
I am so sorry for that.
I was such a stupid young man.

I hate that the bottle killed you.
Each time I was home for a visit you were closer to death.

I have so much guilt about your death.
I didn't do enough.

I know you refused help from everyone.
But I should have asked why.
I should have explored what made it impossible to ask for help.
I should have asked when the last time you could picture asking for help was.
I should have explored it with you, but I was afraid.
Cigarettes, shooting the shit, and sharing a headphone everyday wasn't enough.

I well up with tears now when I hear Nina.
Maybe someday she will speak to me too.

I have become a much better man since you knew me.
And someday soon I will deserve to hang your picture on my wall.

