

Lyn Lifshin

PHOTOGRAPH

When I can't find the photographs
of my mother, it's like losing her
again. There she was, her teeth
still white, raven hair the Charles
River wind sweeps away from where
she was laughing with the man who
wrote, "to my angel from her
Arthur," on the bottom. You know
he is real in poems I wrote about
this shot, wondering if there is
a similar one in his (if he had them)
kids' attic, signed Teddy, the name
my mother choose. This photograph
of the 2 laughing, on my refrigerator
upstate is a piece of my body and
not finding it is like seeing lines
on my skin grow deeper. My mother
must have been mid twenties, her
perfect smile, her gleaming. She was
about to buy a new camisole this
tall man was sure was for him. With
out her smiling and free, the shreds
of laughing left in the mirror,
harden, clench. I want my mother
in that photograph before the lines of
her face began drawing back, when
you could still see the joie de
vivre everyone wrote she had in her
college year book. When I can't
touch this photograph, I lose
a piece of myself that held her

BLUE AT THE TABLE IN THE HOT SUN

give him a shot of light,
give him ragged glass
to escape thru,
black cat blues dogging
the bed

He, ok, it's you, hell bound,
in a hurry. You're pulling blue
out of the strings. Mama's got

a brand new. It's the table
in the light. Cat on the chair
with night scratching

Wind rattles the panes,
rattles gone love thru your
spine. Your baby's
changed the lock on the door

If you're still singing,
earth fills your lips

THE WAY YOU KNOW

suddenly something is very
changed. It's like that
snow smell in the air.
You've noticed it,
haven't you? And know
the way it sends you
tumbling to decades ago.
Smell is the one sense
that can't be censored.
But sometimes just
a word in an e mail, the
slightest dry brush
of lips lays the whole
scenario out. One shrug
of the shoulders of the
man my mother loved,
one *I may have a Yiddisher*
name but that doesn't
mean I'm not goyim
and my mother knew,
as I do, tho we go on
living quietly

**WHEN MY MOTHER'S HAIR
GREW LONGER, LUSH ON IV**

it was as if to make
a pillow for her last
bed. Her skin already
pulling over her bones
so her head was skull
like. When she said
her hair cut was kill-
ing her, it stung like
when she ordered
Death by Chocolate.”
It seems terrible,
what happens to the
body, the perfect
teeth letting go as if
in a hurry to get
somewhere else
while lines become
graves around the
mouth and forehead,
trenches darkness
fills. This broken
body, once in 7 inch
heels darting up
Beacon Hill so fast no
one could keep up
with her

ROSE

when it's behind my knees
you'd have to fall to the
floor, lower your whole
body like horses in a field
to smell it. White Rose
Bulgarian rose. I think of
sheets I've left my scent in
as if to stake a claim for
someone who could never
care for anything alive.
This Bulgarian rose,
spicy, pungent, rose 16h
birthday party dress, rose
lips, nipples. If you won't
fall to your knees, at least,
please, nuzzle, like those
horses, these roses, somewhere