

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

Mike Amado

Memento

We rifle through her mail.

The winning notices that she believed
and never opened. Catalogues of
supplement cures and holistic products
fall into a trash bag.

Only nine hours after the coroner came,
thirteen hours after my sister found her.
Eyes open, frozen, gazing to the west.

She sat in her living room chair all night,
panting. She skipped dinner.

Holding her chest, her last statement
in an "I have spoken" manner was,
"What ever this is . . .

I don't want to live through it."

She believed in the dead. She would
never say "goodbye" to any of us
only "So-long" as we left the house
for the strange outside. She would also
get mad when I left to go to the house
of my best friend, as if death waited
outside ,where her view
from the window faded.

I opened a circle in the livingroom
then placed tobacco near the spot where
she lay for the last time. I left it there
for three days. We let our dead leave us
as soon as they pass, these days.

Grandma mourned for most her life.

Two still born, one son with Down's syndrom

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

who died around my age. He sat in his chair,
in a slurred order, he was gone in an exhale.
As if to say, "What ever this is . . .
I don't want to live through it."

In the family car,
cupped in my mother's hand is an artifact,
Nana's arrowhead I heard about,
only seen once.
"She'd want you to have this."
I slipped the arrowhead in my pocket
It was Nana's link to the left-behind,
the bitter forgotten.

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

Uncle Jerry

This world always finds a soft-spot
to drill the arrow.

He knew that.

Born with a body that moved like
a deflated tire in Nana's grip and
creased hands, tight to his chest,
in a form of unknown prayer.

In the 1940's, Doctors knew
it could not be prevented, but
didn't know about the
extra chromosome.

Nana had to be a rock, especially
when dealing with the Doctors.

As they unloaded their protocol
on her like a falling wall,
she defending, "He's MY son,
I will take care of him." -
shouting at a brick wall.

Finally, when she caved in and
the doctor had his way,
uncle Jerry was locked up
in an asylum in Chicopee Mass.

Then later

a doctor did his best to convince her
to have the tripe-like skin under
the tongue, by the sublingual gland
snipped.

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

Uncle Jerry never spoke there after.
It was anger, maybe.
Or uncle Jerry offering his throat
to the teeth of the bobcat.
Sure his voice was just stutters
and squeaks before then.
But Nana knew what he always said;
mothers always know.
She took care of his deflated body
for the next fifteen years
knowing the
the weight of speech,
the final silence to come.