

Waves

by Pamela Waterbury

Long after the car disappeared,
I still waved goodbye to her
as my grandmother waved off my mother,
and my mother me,
each of us leaving for another world.

Once my daughter's hand held in mine,
we waved "bye-bye" to her grandmother.
With those leavings came returns,
like waves on Lake Michigan's shoreline
until the final no return
of her grandmother's life.

On summer days, my daughter followed the waves,
out and back to shore on sturdy legs.
Water tumbled grainy sand
and quartz against her ankles
while riptide currents lurked just beneath.

At the grade school, I stood watching
her disappear behind heavy doors.
On the surface she floated back, but already
the current tugged her into deeper water.

Now she carries her belongings
to a new room, a new life,
on a distant shore,
our visits ending with my hand raised
to her receding form.

Watching the stillness of frozen water
bent and peaked on the lake
in this gray February cold,
I imagine the currents underneath,
the thaw, and once again waves
against the shore.

Running in Montpellier:

Winter

by Pamela Waterbury

Like a widow layered in black, weighted,
under hat and mittens, disguised and hidden, she
runs into this snow world. Prepared for hills, but
not this storm. Not the below zero
air harsh in her lungs. Not this danger lurking
under each safe-seeming surface.
Constant surveillance for bumpy ground,
slick packed-snow, and black ice patches
exhaust her.

In the city, the murky slush
slows her pace; the stop-start
of dodging a woman lugging groceries,
a stalled truck makes her feel the dampness from
neck to toe. Not the freeing summer wetness from
even pacing, long strides—
vigilance earns this sweat.
Like a burka, her tightly wrapped scarf
conceals her from strangers' stares.

No digressions on these runs, predictable
patterns. The exterior world a blur,
only feet lifting and lowering and breath.
Heavy clothes sealing off the cold
weight her body
as she ascends the hill,
feet allowing only brief spurts of runs.
Her mind focuses on the in and out breath—
pants of labor.

No triumph of a quick spurt ends the run,
only the plodding of one step and the next
brings her to the top of the hill. Pulling off the veil
of her hood she looks back at the frozen world. In
her room, clothes shed,
she's momentarily lightened, returned

Grandmother's Hands

by *Pamela Waterbury*

As teens my hands slept
slathered in Vaseline and white gloves.
I wanted them lacey to utter
like a light breeze through aspen leaves;
hands elegant among the china she gave me;
delicately fingering facets on cut glass bowls; or
a lover's sinewed back

not these competent hands, gifts
from my Germanic grandmother,
tarnished with wrinkles, prominent blue veins,
arthritic angles and bumps,
square-shaped with stubby fingers fanning
off a broad palm.

Forgetting gloves, they
scrub kitchen floors, scrape crusted food
off pans, twist stubborn lids,
dig in garden dirt rooting out weeds.
They leave trails of pencil conversations
on student papers, knit a daughter's scarf
for years at a time.

Nails never perfectly groomed,
reveal the white ridges of my grandmother's.
Each day I watch for the familia tremors—
legacies she gave to my mother, a shaking
that kept her from her paints—
to overtake my hands as they lift
a coffee mug or put down the first line of a poem.

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