

By Stephanie Marchese

“For My Mother”

I remember my face but cannot remember yours, mom. What were you thinking about? What were you feeling? I would hold you but you do not allow it. For some reason, your daughter can give you no solace. I promise I will not turn into a woman such as this. A woman who has succumbed to the offers of a man. Men lie, human beings are faulty by nature. Let me show you that I am special—that I will protect you. My first thought was of you. Even when I was little I knew “this woman has been wounded.” Am I right?

I know now seeing you crumbled in the living room chair, rocking yourself, hand clutching the telephone. You wait. And wait. Back and forth, arms wrapped tightly around you. You finally see me. “I cannot support you and your brother. I cannot work.” We look at your hands, once beautiful, still beautiful, worn from disease. Can I tell you, you are still beautiful? My beautiful mother—the prettiest woman in the world.

Do you remember the picture, mom? The two of us—before everything happened. I smile broadly, proud to sit on your lap. You were mine and I gave myself to you. I see these little capsules of pictures floating in my mind, thoughts of peacefulness and joy weaving in and out of them. They are all gone now. We are finished, you and I—torn apart.

Do you remember mom? Do you know I love you still, as I loved you then? I am your daughter, and yet I have run away. I never meant to leave you. I will return. I often do, in all those silences over the phone, I whisper “I love you mom.” I leave this message after the beep on the answering machine that has no message. I write you constantly, pages galore, but never actually put pen to paper. Separation. It hurts me. I cannot come to your home. I am sorry. But I do remember.

Mom?