

THE HOUSE ON HOPE STREET

Tenderness depends on how little the world touches you. I ^{am} ~~was~~ everything but tender. There are times I feel like I'm driftwood trying to remember what I had broken from to get here, wherever that is. I remember being a child who still knew what it meant to be "happy". "Tell me, Tell me how blessed are we to have tragedies so small it can fit on the tips of our tongue" my mother used to say all the time. I think part of that is true. When my father left us, I was speechless. When my step-father assaulted me, I couldn't speak for 48 hours. The day he kicked me out of ~~our~~ my home, I had to send a search party to find my mother's voice. It's funny how people still don't know that silence and tragedy often has the same definition.

I snap out of my thoughts when a door shuts nearby, and ^{the} sharp stench of latex and hand sanitizer pulls me back to the hospital room.

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I've been putting my mother's stuff away in cardboard boxes, packing up 3 entire years of our life and taping it with duct tape, our hopes so small it could easily fit inside without much trouble. I found my mother 3 years ago, right after I breathed the heavy air of adulthood; sick, widowed and almost as fragile as a china cup; and three hours after, I realized that I'd lose her, again. In the past three years, I saw her go through her worst battling cancer. And even though she did win some battles, the doctors knew she'd lose the war, in the end. I've waited in hospital rooms, to get the test results from the MRI scan that tries to locate the malady that keeps her mind guessing, I wrote poems for her everyday until my wrists ached, just to remind her that she is strong, it's just that the world has a funny way of hiding places fertile enough for ~~bodies~~ like bodies like hers to grow roots.

Her then husband, my stepfather, left her

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a couple of years ago. It was an easy divorce. So when the doctor said it was best for her to rest at home now, spend the rest of her days in peace and good company, we went back to our old house. Not my cranky apartment that could barely fit 2 people, but my home. The house, where I remember each corner by touch alone, the one I stood in front of that night in the cold, to let me back in, begging and wailing; I remember the sound of the door being shut so loud, it felt as if though the sharpness of that noise ^{had} cut my hopes into pieces.

When I was a child, my father, real father, left me. To this day, I never knew why. My mother had to re-marry to support our family. My stepdad decided that feeding the hungry mouth of a 6 year old was less rewarding than investing in stocks. That was when my mother got pregnant with his child. That's when he finally decided that he didn't need me anymore.

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and that is exactly when the abuse started. I knew the sort of pain so harsh, that sometime it felt easier to pick up a rusted blade than to wake and see another day; ~~that was when I turned 12~~. I remember running away to the park bench, cause where else when you're 12. I remember searching for my mother's love in all the corners of the world. It just was never there. Even to this day, everytime a man raises his voice, I'm 7 again, he is picking up ^{my} ~~your~~ things threatening to leave ^{me} ~~you~~ behind, a hand on my ~~your~~ throat to teach ^{me} ~~you~~ obedience. I grew up in such a way that everytime a door shuts and I'm forced to open it, I expect the door knob to be locked. And the day he kicked me out, the door knob didn't budge more.

I packed up the flower vases, almost left behind, the browning sunflowers, and headed towards home. My mother was ~~already~~ already there when I pushed the

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front door open, tugged neatly into a wheelchair. Her clasp of white hair felt like broken snow in the sun. Our home. It was so filled with hope that it made it almost impossible to not assume the worst.

I smiled at her and our eyes met, and a sea of unspoken words collided. She couldn't speak after her throat surgery, the cancer had spread to her vocal cords. I ~~tugged~~ ^{tugged} her away into bed and headed outside. I've never talked to her about all the years I spent without her, leaving a mother's warmth. I never spoke about the bad almost expired food I had to eat, the places on the streets I had to sleep, the first week when I was homeless. I didn't ask her about her's either. I already knew it from the others. I never asked her the 3 letter word that has been haunting me ever since I left that house. "Why?" I knew that right now, she didn't

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have the strength to revisit the past. And honestly, as much as it hurts me to not know the reason she didn't try, try for me, I'd rather kiss her goodnight than pierce her heart with questions. Sometimes, the hope for a future that has the power to warm your numbness is so strong, that it blurs out reasons. It's my birthday today, and I would've wanted her to give me the gift of her guts on the floor, to see if she still had it in her. But sometimes, forgiveness is sweet. So when I got my mother back, with no reason as to why, I took what I was offered and ~~saw~~ ran.

Am I supposed to be grateful to have survived this? Perhaps, though I still wonder if there is a way to ~~cut~~ talk about the past without letting the hurt consume me, to care for the wound without opening it back up.

I might never have the chance to tell my mother everything I wanted her to know, but I want her

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to know that I forgive her, because it's getting harder for me to ignore the hurt that keeps pooling her eyes everytime I see her face. And I know I'd stutter too hard to say this to her face and I'd rather give her something solid to hold onto, than voices that are lost to the wind. And so, I did what I do best.

"

Dear Ma,

The day I realized that the world is twice as big ~~as I think~~ than I thought it was, I was ~~so~~ in awe that I sat and thought about it, and came to a conclusion that the world might be big, ^{but} and you made that idea less devastating. I wonder why you didn't come for me that night, all the time. And everytime, my thoughts touch the ceiling, bounce on the four walls and falls back to the exact same place. I like to think that you didn't call me back home, because you loved me too much to

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let me go through that torture. That maybe, to love something, is to name it after something so worthless, it might be left untouched and alive. I spent the next 8 years of my life with my godfather, uncle John who was kind enough to take me in. My godfather's truck was a 2 seater, unfit for a family of four, but he carved out space in the back and installed 2 jumpseats for his 2 children, me nestled snug between them, their bodies my seatbelt. When you don't fit in, you make space for yourself and you trust the people around you to keep you safe. That's what I did Ma. I never stopped hoping. During the summer, we didn't have trees to make tree houses so we made do with tents on rooftops. I'm telling you all this so you believe me, ~~when I say~~ when you worry if I'll ever have space for you in my heart, and I tell you I can make room. Growing up, I never had a proper home but maybe home

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is just a pair of hands that wraps around you when you're at your worst. I have you now, ma. In the past, when I thought about home, it made me think of that it embodied a death that doesn't finish. A death that keeps dying as we walk past it. But now ma, this house is brimming with so much hope, so much so that I'm afraid if I even breathe the wrong way, it'll collapse. The streets remind me of the sunflower garden that used to be here. It used to be my favourite flower because it grew taller than people, it still is. I remember the day I got beaten so bad, I ran with tears dripping down my face, I ran till I could hear ^{all} her ^{was} my heart beating in my ears, I ran till I forgot I was 10. But the hopes of having something warm, the hopes of being able to at least hope for something less sad is so severe, that it's starting to drown the voices of my past ma. ^{Now} The wet leaves of on the sidewalk and cobblestones reminds me

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more of rain than tears. I used to wonder
"when can I say your name and have it mean
only your name & not what you left behind".
and even though I don't think I could subtract
any meaning from it, I could add more
beautiful memories with you in hopes that it
will matter more in the end. I try to be kind
to everything I see, and in everything I see,
I see you. The human heart has such stubborn hope.
and ~~some~~^{this} day, the urge to hope ~~with love~~.
became greater than the urge to write a suicide
note. our little house on hope street. our home.
with love,