

Ode to Kara

In the silence of snow
your heavy step seems to vibrate
through the walls.

I sense your presence as you walk,
or rather hobble
up our steep hill after school.
Now it is white outside,
each season quilts new colors
blurry and crisp
to frame your moving form.
We share our young girlhood
at the widest point of a circle.

Envisioning you now is easy.
The sameness
of your navy blue coat,
always mis-buttoned and crooked
or thrown wide open
to welcome cold winter air.
In rhythm with the sway of your navy blue coat,
your oversized book bag swings
with buckles flung wide open.

I hear the steady hum of your voice,
reciting the Presidents
or singing your songs
through the open window.
We all heard you each day and like clockwork,
my mother's voice urged me to walk with you
"be kind," and so I did, or I tried.

This snowy day was calm
with a fresh, white blanket laid in early morning.
Unbidden, I ran fast to meet you.
Abandoning old stone walls and slipping on hidden layers of ice,
I barely kept my balance, but I did.
This day I wanted to walk with you.
Joy swept across your face and we shared that joy.

This time, for the first time
I noticed a weariness in your round face
landscaped with acne.
Large, crooked glasses perch above your wide smile
as you greet me.

Walking together up our hill that day
My young girl inside stopped
being curious about you.

I was just being with you,
as we walked together.

Days and years pass like a breeze
illusions of coolness, and worse than curious
was judgment,
and then more distance.

Decades beyond the snowy quiet day, a scent or sound
beckons the past,
and there you are.

I sense your steps and your wide smile.
I can even feel the sway of your book bag-
and then,
as softly as snow falling
my heart warms and unfolds,
begins to love wider-
and inwardly I bow down,
to thank you.

Nance Reynolds

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