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You Didn't Ask Me

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Cover Page Footnote

This poem is available in The Angle: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol2007/iss3/15
I should never drink alone like this.
But you're not here
To tell me when...

I should stop.
I should count.
I should quit while I'm behind.
Someone just to say,
"When I get old, I'm gonna miss you all the time."

You didn't ask me
so I didn't tell you
that I went to pawn my wedding bands
and a little golden medallion
and they had no value
not even $20
that's about the same in Euros
or 600 Dominican pesos
which sounds a bit better
but still they're nothing but
worthless pieces of bronze.

Because you didn't ask me
I didn't tell you
that I was six months behind
in child support
and they were going to take away
my driver's license
how stupid is that
since if I can't get to work
they can't get any more money
like blood out of a stone
and even stupider
if they were going to put me in jail
because then nobody would ever see any money
ever again.

Because you didn't ask me
I didn't tell you
that my son will grow up
to marry a size six airbrushed beauty
and she'll end up in the slim woman's harem
binge and purging
until he has to put her in her plain white shroud
into the ground
with a flat headstone
wouldn't it be better to buy
a blow-up doll instead?
You didn’t ask me
so I didn’t tell you
that the Nazarene came down from the cross
and hasn’t gotten back up there yet
but still the ones
who circle around the Black Stone
want to cut off my head.

Should I ask you for absolution
or make up a penance of my own
I’m through with crosses and crescents
altogether.

You didn’t ask me
so I didn’t tell you.

My grandmother’s house smelled like love. The kitchen was always baking, boiling,
simmering – the pepperoni pizza, the pesto, xastina in chicken soup. The living room
was bright and comfortable – the squeaky, soft couch (the davenport, they called it)
draped with the maple syrup crocheted blanket, the ivory-colored chairs covered in plastic,
the baby basil and thyme sprouting in milk cartons cut in half on the windowsill, the old TV (a piece of furniture, she calls it) on which a couple of Virgin Marys, the pope,
and some relatives I don’t remember watching me watch TV. The bathroom was always clean, but always smelled like Grampa’s Old Spice, like fresh cut hair when Granna
trimmed my bangs, like Mentadent toothpaste. The bedrooms, especially the one that used to be Uncle John’s that I slept in on the double bed, were Granna’s beauty powder.
The garage-turned-porch was a forest – the wooden rocking chairs, clothespins, the cuckoo clock that never worked quite right, and old, heavy tennis rackets. The basement was sealed with homemade tomato sauce and peaches from the backyard during the canning season, along with Grampa’s wine.

Grampa died.
Gramma moved.
Her apartment smells like nothing.