

R U T H   H A I K U S

Steve Price

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This book is dedicated to my mother and all mothers,  
wherever they may be.

**TOO FAST**

Whistling while she works—  
all day long. At her age,  
everything's work.

Her morning sneezes.

No one's counting.

The last one, a dud.

Couldn't hurt a fly.

They're too fast for her.

Bathes with Jean Naté,  
Sprays her hair with Alberto.  
Personal hygiene.



We'd lie on the couch  
watching *General Hospital*.  
Now the real thing.

Music therapist  
sings us “Moon River”.  
My face is wet.

Her Thanksgiving tray.

She's not hungry.

Me neither.

Soundless morning.

I walk to her room, careful  
not to step on a crack.

“When will this be over?”

She means the pandemic.

Coffee Häagen-Dazs,  
single-serving cup.  
She lets me feed her.

My phone rings.

She's gone.

Nachos on the table.

**FROGS**



Early morning walk,  
lilacs suddenly blur.  
She loved purple.

When anyone died,  
I'd write the sympathy card.  
Now I'm reading one.

Her frogs—  
rings, pins, pendants—  
a jump in my chest.

Another Sunday  
without our Sunday phone call.  
How long has it been?

It used to bug me—  
questions, questions, questions!  
Now I miss them.

Mother's Day coming up,  
the first one without her.  
I walk by the card store.

Indent balls of dough  
with roundhead clothespin.  
Fill with jelly.

Her purple watch  
upon on my fingertips,  
still telling time.



This winter, no box  
of honey bell oranges.  
Sun on our doorstep.

**ALMOST**

Snow-day trudge  
to the store for cigarettes.  
I lag behind her.

He's teaching tonight;  
she takes me to Perkins.  
Pancakes for supper!

R and P, her initials—  
earrings from me  
when I was ten.

Can any of these words  
bring her back?  
Almost.

“Hey Price, your mother!”

“At least I have a mother.”

He points to her car.

Like an astronaut  
walking a beagle on the moon.  
Her snowmobile suit.



*Ketzie*: Yiddish  
for kitten: how she signed  
this note to my father.

Mad I stole the map,  
she goes back and pays for it.  
No one wants it.

She's tucking me in,  
my face in her fur coat.  
Saturday night.

All she wanted for me  
was to be happy.  
Here I go.

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