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The Letter

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Mary Dengler

“Can you come home right now?” my husband asked.
“What for? Are you all right? I’ve work to do.”
“Something serious has happened. I’ll explain
When you get home.” A letter had arrived, years after
That traumatic birth. It was the shock I thought
I’d never have on earth: to hear if he was living,
Dead, or struggling on the street. First the letter
From his counselor arrived. In terms discreet,
She’d written how he’d searched for me for years.
And now, after her call inquiring if I’d want to meet
Him after all this time, his letter came, expressing fears,
But gratitude—for birthing him; he’d been adopted
By a loving home. He’d planned to offer help,
He said, envisioning me on Fremont Street, Wild Turkey
bottle in my hand, bonbons in my mouth. How could this be?
I’d closed the books—I’d wanted to protect him
From well-meaning, troubled relatives
Who’d complicate his life. I didn’t know
His mother and his own genetic code
Would prompt his search. How did I feel?
As if my molecules were separating, turning into light,
Re-fusing to a star, transcending ordinary time. From that
Rebirth I learned to breathe anew; sat down to write
The most important letter of my life and his,
And mailed it overnight. Two days from then he called.
Again I was reborn, as was the dad he didn’t know I’d wed
After a gunshot rearranged his troubled head and put us
Back together on a road that circles and returns,
With nothing left behind. Now, pictures floated
Toward me, on my screen—four decades of his checkered life,
Each focused on a phase I’d missed. I looked in mirrors
Of myself, at images of family passed—unruly
Locks of darkest hair, and eyes of darkest brown, the frame
Of husband here and father gone. In him, both families
—Scot and English—were reborn, made gold in petri dish
With godly Dutch Reformed, as only God can do.
He gave us life, redeemed our past, and moved us
Forward with this gift—our unplanned, unforgotten,
Stunning child of God.