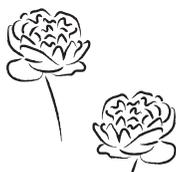


Zacharia Heider

*To the sister I never had*



I will always regret the things  
we could have shared:  
the nights I'd stay awake  
because you would not put the phone down –  
these walls are very thin;  
the days you – (mom) –  
would make me play house  
when I wanted to play Army Men;  
the days that you had to play Army Men  
    anyway.

I will miss seeing things your way  
when I ask for advice;  
    you: another lens  
    you: a funny way of making life  
seem like a movie in 3D;  
your favorite color  
    was always blue.

Sister, it breaks my heart  
to know that I will never counsel you.  
I will miss the night that you finally put the phone down  
and shed your thousandth tear:  
pounding,  
    heavy,  
    like the horns from *Inception*, I'd hear;

these walls are very thin.  
 I won't show up at your door with  
 two spoons  
   one gallon –  
   triple chocolate –  
     and *(500) Days of Summer* – your favorite –  
 to stay up all night with boxes and boxes of tissues.  
 We will set the phone in our laps as we gorge.  
 You will complain about it going straight to your butt;  
 I say: at least you have one and  
   we laugh.

Each time you look  
 from bowl to screen  
   to phone to screen  
   to bowl to  
     phone I would  
 resist the urge to say:  
 He's not calling you back.  
 Instead I would give you  
 three hundred calories of muscular flexion:  
 I will hug every last ounce of sadness out,  
 I will wring your pulp heart dry of every salt memory  
   until all you have left is a damp,  
   wrinkled core  
   left in the sun to dry.  
 And you fall asleep on my shoulder.

I will never  
 be the first one to hear you scream  
 when the night terrors won't leave;  
 be the first one to hold you,  
   be the one to dig through the attic, cluttered,  
   3' AM – half scared to death myself  
   just to find an old blankie or  
   bear,  
 press it into your arms and

hush you back to sleep,  
it's beautiful.

You are so beautiful.

So when I say  
that he doesn't deserve you,

I really mean it.

You are exceptional,  
you are beyond words and

I wish

O sister, how I wish,  
that you could be more  
than this poem.