



Artwork: Mari Honma

Eulogy

Sylvie Beauvais

My father died three days after my birthday.
 His earthly body was done for—a glance would have told you
 —the face that reeked of pain and had no teeth, and all the wrinkles, like the traces of knives
 drawn against the contours of his eyes.
 His anorexic body, the ruined lungs,
 The bony feet flitting incessantly,
 A reminder of his restless, unhinged mind.
 It was hard to see him clearly, through the fog that surrounded him: one part tobacco smoke
 One part delirium and decay,
 The joyful moments:
 The unbelievable sweetness he held within
 That he would share, like heaps of colossal riches,
 If the desire struck.
 He could be so kind and so patient and so attentive.
 He liked to celebrate,
 To capture the moment,
 To go out somewhere good, and eat something delicious,
 And drink something cold, with bubbles.
 Glad at your presence,
 Glad to see you once again and hear your voice,
 To ask how you were, and listen for the unsaid in your answer.
 Truth be told, he usually had trouble listening to conversation.
 Regular conversation was too common for his tastes—he wanted lightning and primordial
 molecules, a bestseller and the time you lied your way into the lead role of an opera (or some
 other high daring story).
 I held no primordial molecules, but hoped for that bestseller, honing my writing, writing words
 he would never read.
 He liked my taste in men, for that I was grateful. Inasmuch as he shaped my taste in men, a
 leaning towards the intellectually curious, and the kind, and the passionate, and the big hearted:
 people to go on adventures with.
 He told me it made sense to want to make love to the people you fell in love with.
 That oblique comment meant he didn't mind my bisexuality.
 He told me he was proud of my decision to be a therapist. He thought it was good to help
 others (he too had been curious about psychology, but his father had barred the way).
 He taught me to go out deep and far into Atlantic waves, and then how to swim under the tall
 breakers and pace my breathing and stay calm.
 He taught me to value the rich and the poor.
 He taught me to enjoy science fiction and fantasy, myths and legends.

He taught me to eat outside, and picnic at the beach, and pick wild fruit off bushes, and love trees.
He loved books, he read voraciously, incessantly when I was young.
Then one day the reading stopped and I knew my father had changed.
Unlike him, I remain devoted to books.
They have held me without pause.
He taught me to charm, to flirt without being sexual.
To flirt sexually, I would figure out on my own.
He taught me to be generous, perhaps too generous, and to stop and help those who need you.
My father young was quite good looking, with wild dark curls and vivid blue eyes, and fair skin.
He was lanky, shrugged into his sweater, bony shoulder sticking out if you held him there in a hug.
He was talented enough in too many things. He assumed casually that if he tried something he would probably be good at it.
I did not inherit this confidence.
He would lie around, and then have a fit of activity and make something, perhaps out of wood.
Or pick up a tennis racket once a year and have a match.
His body was coordinated and graceful.
I am more awkward though I used to be more like him, lanky.
He taught us to build fires in chimneys, which we did very young at the farmhouse.
He liked candlelight and firelight and the smell of smoke.
He inhaled cigarettes and tobacco: they impregnated everything in him and around him.
He was very good to me when I was small—lots of hugs, and long conversations, and Unexpected presents to treat my melancholy and my bad dreams.
He was also funny and a bit cruel. I had many headaches in grade school which he threatened to treat with a hammer to my toes.
He was irreplaceable, which is why his schizophrenia was particularly cruel for me.
Watching him be dismantled from the inside of his brain, going deeper into the abstract, far past the breakers, where no one could reach him.
I have the dim memories of the prince from my childhood.
And the memories his family and friends shared of the times they adored him: his wit, his verve.
And now he is where he fits best, among the stars,
And in the dust,
And, sometimes,
 a bit of laughter,
 and some kindness towards a stranger,
 and enthusiasm for the magical,
All moments that let me know I am his daughter

Artwork: Dante Biss-Grayson

