

Dylan

A Letter to My Son

20 June 2006

I kept you tucked away, safely, in a drawer; the cabinet crusted over with cobwebs, the drawer dragging its weight every time I opened it. Sometimes I would rummage around, and pull out a morsel of our time together, time when you were sheltered inside me.

But I lived quite oblivious to your skinned knees, crayoned valentines and sweaty socks.
I didn't see your first step, hear your first word or feel the first fuzz on your chin.
I don't know if you like avocados or won't eat anything green.
I never had to move my car so you could get to yours.
I wonder if you, too, have discovered an allergy to milk.
I fear that your kneecaps dislocate like my brother's and mine do.
I don't know if they still call you Bobby or if you are now Rob or Bob or Robert.
I don't know if I'm a grandmother.

I surrendered to *wiser* counsel and left a tiny creature, cradled in white, in a glass-lined room. I tolerated my ignorance, felt it appropriate, safe, good.
My father never discussed it, neither did my grandmothers.

Your father never understood. His sister didn't either.
When she told me he was murdered in prison, I was glad I didn't have to tell you.

I named you Dylan; your parents never knew that. When I saw the snapshot of your first birthday, many years ago, I knew from the inscription on the back that they called you Bobby.
Your last name was locked away in a vault and I never searched for it.

Last month, I was given the key. A person bearing your name, your birth date is located in a city just 75 miles away from me, only 300 miles north of where we last met – me gazing from outside those glass walls, you still unable to focus your eyes. Before, I was afraid to step forward, because of so many steps I had to take back. Now, my ignorance and fear of your rejection is no longer supportable.

I slide the drawer open and *come what may* flies out. I can't close it again.

Jacquelyn Wells