Promise Kept



Mira Felder

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Twenty

I dreaded twenty for as long as I can remember,
but here it is, sitting beside me,
unmoved by my reluctance.

Not a teen, not twenty-one
a number with no built-in thrill,
no wish to make without flinching.

They say a new chapter,
but the page still feels the same.

In ten years, I'm supposed to know,
supposed to have built something,
a steady career, a new family,
stability.
But the foundation trembles, exposed.

Still, I let twenty settle in,
not as a deadline, but as a door,
a space between what was and what could be.

If nothing else, I have time.

Broken Plans

He says, *let's get coffee*, and I know
I'll sip alone.
A text half-sent, a promise misplaced,
another plan dissolves before it's made.

I used to wait,
watch the clock, refresh the thread,
fill the gaps with excuses,
until silence became the only answer.

Now, I let the quiet stay.
No waiting, just space—
for morning to stretch across my desk,
for pages to turn uninterrupted.

Things fall through.
I do not.
I sit with myself,
a promise kept.

The Rave

Inseparable once,
everyone said so, laughing, nudging
like it was obvious, like it was written.
You and me, side by side,
matching steps without trying,
thinking the same thought before it was said.

There was a time I didn't know where I ended and you began:
long nights talking,
days spent filling the same spaces,
an easy, effortless closeness I thought would never shift.

Lights spinning,
bass thumping through my ribs,
drinks in hand.
Everything blurring at the edges
but you were clear,
sharper than anything else in the room.

Across the crowd,
a different orbit now,
talking to someone else,
laughing in a way I didn’t recognize.

I tried to catch your eye,
to remember if we spoke at all,
to pretend it wasn’t happening.

But it was.
The distance had finally rooted itself between us,
wide and aching.

The rave ended.
We ended.

Without words,
without a scene,
without the dignity of a real goodbye.

Just a silence that rang in my ears
louder than the music did.

I Think I Saw Her Again

She slipped through the door,
laughing, chai in her hand,
friends orbiting her like moons.

She’s no longer the girl I remember,
but her smile remains,
reaching her eyes.

Braids framed her face
like memories I’ve kept in the back of my mind,
like the ones she wore before
she thought she had to change.

She tucked one knee into the chair,
like grounding herself
still mattered.

She moved easy now—
choosing
becoming
unfolding without rush.

For a second,
those always-searching eyes
glanced my way.

Paused.
Almost seeing.

For a moment,
I wanted to speak
but I stayed silent
and let her keep her wonder.

Pisces Princess

I cry at commercials,
at weddings,
and because I can’t find my other sock.

I say I want to be present,
but I live in the past and future,
in the almosts,
the could-bes.

I try every hobby like it might save me:
pottery, baking, piano, perfume-mixing,
then googling how to move to Italy.

I fall in love on public transportation,
with strangers who hold open doors,
with girls who smell like coconut and walk like poetry,
with baristas who spell my name right.

I forget what I was talking about mid-sentence,
then remember it two hours later,
write it down in my Notes app like it's holy,
rearrange it into something that sounds like a
memory.

I romanticize every interaction:
the way she looked up when she said hi,
the way he paused, as though he had more to say.
I replay it like a scene.

I can't let things go,
even the tiny ones:
the almost friendships, the birthday texts,
the glances in passing—
little glass jars shelved in my brain.

I want to be soft and wise,
mysterious and known,
a muse and the artist,
the storm and the calm that follows.
I want to be loved without ever having to ask for it.

So if I’m crying again,
or reinventing myself once more,
just know
it’s not a phase,
it’s just me.

Struggle to Surrender

if i bring it all
my questions
the edge of my faith
the way i flinch when silence falls
will you still call me beloved?

if i bring half-prayers
fear dressed as strength
the ache i haven't named
will you meet me
as you say you will?

i don't know if it's faith
or desperation
that keeps me
but i am here again.

make room in me
not when i'm strong
but when i'm tired
tender
still choosing You.

i bring my shame
not sins but habits
i can’t begin to name
the days i go quiet on purpose
the people i can’t stop thinking about
the fear i’ll never be fully known
and still fully wanted.

i bring the little lies i tell myself
the hopes i pretend i’ve let go of
my hunger to be loved
in a way that doesn’t leave.

make room in me
not for perfection
but for presence
not for clarity
but for closeness
not for answers
but for the way You stay.

i’ve worshipped with a lump in my throat
tears that never fell
and You met me anyway
not in the loud songs
but in the quiet ones
the still ones
the ones that made me feel known.

make room in me
where striving once lived
where fear used to sleep
where i thought i had to earn it.

claim me as Yours
not just on the mountaintop
but here when i’m low
and still looking up.

make room in me
even if i come empty-handed
even if i don’t feel holy
even if i am only
here.

Stay Determined

Thoughts wandering,
Etched in the fog of my mind.
Mistook sparks for fire—
But still, I stayed.

Open Mic

Here we stand alone,
forced to cope.
The mic, its might
it shouts at us: hope.
The pull we feel, will it draw us close?

Cafe register
the only witness
to our silent pledges.
The pull we felt, will it draw us close?

A look long imagined,
the songs you chose,
I swore they spoke of love.

I told myself I'd leave,
but still, I wait,
lingering at the threshold,
watching time slip by.
Your heart is fleeting,
like sledding down winter's slope.

A thread unseen that pulls but won’t expose:
The pull we feel, but will it draw us close?

Only Mother

Only mother could raise me
with a compass in hand,
charting paths she'd never walked.

She made her own way,
made a way for me,
made a world out of nothing,
and we never felt anything was missing.

I never asked for siblings—
I was enough, I thought.
But she was always more than enough,
in ways I couldn't see,
but felt in everything.

Only mother could raise a lonely child
and fill her arms with love
so full I never noticed the empty spaces.

Only mother could raise me
with no blueprint but her heart,
no hand to hold but her own;
and somehow,
she held both of us.

She gave me a world bigger than the one she was given,
taught me to walk through doors she had to carve open,
to speak in rooms she never entered,
to believe I belonged.

She made it look easy—
the early mornings,
the quiet sacrifices,
the way she wove love into everything.

An only child by my own stubborn wish,
lucky enough to never feel alone.
Because her love was always enough.
Louder than silence,
stronger than absence,
steady as the city skyline
she built our lives against.

Only mother.
Always mother.

Split Identity

Bald baby,
I came into the world with nothing but soft skin
and the promise of texture.

Then

Tender-headed;
tears well at my lash line,
a ceremony of pain and patience.
The comb finds resistance,
each knot a memory,
a snarl of lineage and inconvenience.
My scalp splits open
in neat parts,
a quiet sacrifice
as my head meets the pillow.

I go on hiatus
from protective styles.
They say I am my mother's twin.
She with the jet-straight bob,
precise as a ruler,
bangs curtaining her brow,
a style so polished
it earns silence.

I carry the relaxer in a plastic bag
as if shame has a scent.
Everything clockwork:
scalp burns,
scissors whisper.
And still,
Unmanageable,
Un-white.

She stands behind me,
arms raised in ritual,
threading barrettes into place
as I stare into the mirror.
How cute do you look! she says,
like magic is born from plastic and patience.

I watch her hair float
in the manufactured wind
of the subway's approach,
perfectly tousled,
as if undone just right,
her iced coffee never spilling.
Even her mess is practiced.

I dream of wearing her hair like a wig,
slipping it on
and into ease.

But my care
is all or nothing.
Neglect grows fast.
Wash your hair,
cleanse your spirit.
But if I wash it,
will I wash away
the grit that protects me?

Dirty.
Contaminated.
Mind like the basin of a sink
after wash day.

Someone else's perfect echoes in my skull,
a looped track I can't unhear.
Trends flutter past me
like butterflies I'm forbidden to catch:
space buns, claw clips, messy buns.
Not for your texture.
Too much volume.
Too much you.

This uniqueness:
A crown.
A curse.
Each strand a rebellion.
Each curl,
a risk to everything I've worked for.

And still,
I part my hair again.
I press it, stretch it,
love it, hate it.
I show up
split,
but whole.

Author Bio

Mira Felder is a sophomore at Wesleyan University majoring in Science and Technology Studies (STS) with a concentration in psychology. Originally from Manhattan, New York, Mira explores the intersections of emotion, identity, and relationships through her poetry.

