

Sometimes the key arrives long before the lock. Sometimes a story falls in your lap. Once about a hundred pounds of apricots fell into mine Rebecca's. They came in three big boxes, and to keep them from crushing one another under their weight or from rotting in close quarters, I she spread them out on a sheet on the plank floor of my her bedroom. There they presided for some days, a story waiting to be told, a riddle to be solved, and a harvest to be processed. They were an impressive sight, a mountain of apricots in every stage from hard and green to soft and browning, though most of them were that range of shades we call apricot: pale orange with blushes of rose and yellow gold zones, upholstered in a fine velvet, not as fuzzy as peaches, not as smooth as plums. The ripe ones had the faint sweet perfume particular to that fruit.

I she had expected them to look like abundance itself and they looked instead like anxiety, because every time I she came back there was another rotten one or two or three or dozen to cull, and so I she fell to inspecting the pile every time I she passed by instead of admiring it. The reasons why I Rebecca came to have a heap of apricots on my her bedroom floor are complicated. They came from my her mother's tree, from the home she her mother no longer lived in, in the summer when a new round of trouble began.

Two summers before the apricots, my her mother had begun to get confused, to get lost, to lock herself out of her own house, to have serial emergencies that often prompted her to call me Rebecca for a rescue or a solution. She had memorized my Rebecca's phone number decades before; my Rebecca's three brothers lived no farther away, but they had other area codes and newer numbers, and she her mother had always hidden her troubles from them. They were the audience for her best self, for whom she wished to be seen as, and I Rebecca was stationed backstage, where things were messier.

I Rebecca told my her middle and younger brothers that we they needed to make it a group effort, because if this chaos remained my her mother's and my Rebecca's secret, as most of her the mother's illnesses and complaints had been before, it could consume me Rebecca. These brothers did a lot for her in other ways; they stepped up, and the burden was shared, but all her emergency calls still came to me Rebecca. One day I Rebecca asked her her mother why she always called me her and not them. "Well, you're the girl," she said, then added, "and you're just sitting around the house all day doing nothing anyway." That was one way to describe the life of a writer.

She Her mother lost her car, and I Rebecca went over and drove her around until we they found it; we they crossed our their fingers until she lost her driver's license for good; she lost her purse and I Rebecca turned her house upside down until it showed up on the seat of a chair pushed into a desk days after we they'd given up; she lost her keys or her wallet, and we they came over and unlocked the door with our their keys and made more keys and left one with her nearby friend, and hid one on the premises, and then a replacement, and then one after that. I Rebecca never knew when the phone would ring with an emergency, and when the phone didn't

ring, I she worried about whether she her mother was in such dire straits that she didn't even have access to a phone or the capacity to use it. I Rebecca was constantly on edge, waiting for the next crisis.

We they kept trying to prop her up at home. I Rebecca put a hook behind the front door to hang her purse on so she'd know where it was, but she wouldn't use it, and she took my Rebecca's proposal to reduce her nine or so purses to one badly; she liked the big red luggage tag I Rebecca put on the key to the front door until she lost it, and then a series of highly visible successors, and appreciated the list of essential phone numbers I Rebecca pinned to the wall, but she called up and cursed me her the day I Rebecca borrowed her address book so I she could make a large copy bound in red with a ribbon on it to tether to furniture or dangle out of piles.

The copy got lost too, but not as often, and I Rebecca had another photocopy to back up the backup, in the day when she her mother still read and used phones and kept up with friends. I Rebecca bought a corded telephone that wouldn't get lost or drained of power the way the cordless ones did, but couldn't ensure it would be hung up in between calls, and, because she her mother couldn't learn how to punch in the time on modern microwave keypads, I Rebecca found an old dial operated microwave, like the one she her mother had burned out by setting it to heat something for hours instead of minutes. I Rebecca found a pretty chain for her eyeglasses and then another one and helped her get more pairs of glasses.

Like many elderly people, she her mother was convinced that, rather than her losing things, others were stealing them - irons, purses, keys, laundry, money - and she lost more things by hiding them from these fictitious characters who helped conceal her real problems. The world of her imagination filled up with thieves and prowlers, though she'd never actually been the victim of a crime in that nice neighborhood twenty miles north of the city. She was afraid of people peering in the window and had most of them entirely covered, so that she would live by lamplight on a blazing blue and gold July day.

She tried to take the bus to see a friend who was having a birthday and got off at the wrong stop and took, so far as I Rebecca could tell, a long hike across the shoulder of the small mountain between two towns and then got rides from passersby, none of whom bothered to take her all the way, and ended up home. She reported on it blithely, as an adventure, but a few years before, two elderly sisters she knew had gotten lost on a hike in her county. I Rebecca can not remember if one or both died of exposure before they were located. My her middle brother ordered a medical alert bracelet with contact information on it and put it on her like a dog tag in those days when we they were propping her up with devices and systems that would mostly fail anyway.

I Rebecca composed an essay in my her head somewhere in the midst of all these crises called "Shipwrecked on the Dark Continent" but never found time to write it. Taking care of the

elderly comes without the vast literature of advice and encouragement that accompanies other kinds of commitments, notably romantic love and childbearing. It sneaks up on you as something that is not supposed to happen, or rather you crash into this condition that you have not been warned about, a rocky coast not on the map. In the preferred stories the last years of life are golden and the old all ripen into wisdom, not decay into diseases that mimic mental illness and roll backward into chaotic childhood and beyond. My her mother had always wanted me Rebecca to take care of her, but she pictured this as a manifestation of her ascendancy, not her decline.

We they took her to doctors who treated us them like delinquent parents for letting her live alone, though it wasn't up to us them and we they were trying to change the situation. They offered prescriptions but no advice on how to get her to take a pill twice a day when she didn't know what day it was and what she'd done ten minutes ago. I Rebecca tried a wall calendar with crack baggies containing the day's prescriptions stapled to each day, but she never looked at the calendar. That was the era of patching and bailing the sinking boat.

We they floundered through a few grueling years of these crises while I Rebecca mounted a low key campaign to convince her her mother that leaving her suburban home of thirty years would be a boon. I Rebecca would point out that if she lived in a building with a manager, she would never have to wait for someone to drive out from another county to unlock her door, and that it would be more sociable. She was lonely too, with her driver's license taken away, her old friends dying or distancing themselves or at the other end of a lost or dead telephone, with the necessary phone numbers in the missing phone book.

Finally, at the beginning of the apricot summer, we they moved her to a charming independent-living senior apartment complex near my Rebecca's two relevant brothers and still a bridge away from me Rebecca, and things began falling apart in earnest. When we they'd moved her from her dark, disheveled home we they'd pried her loose from a map of familiar routines and layouts, within which she had been able to cope by habit. Or perhaps we they hadn't realized the extent to which she had not been coping.

When we they packed her home up, I Rebecca found fruit decomposing in dark cupboards, a trivet for hot dishes in her sock drawer, family photographs and her wedding pictures in the other clothing drawers, and wads of bills cached in all kinds of hiding places and fallen behind bureaus, and chaotic piles and tangles everywhere. The new place was just a studio apartment, and it justified simplifying her possessions down to essentials. She her mother saw this as taking her things away, when she wasn't regarding the new place as a temporary lodging, a hotel, from which she'd return to her old territory.

She never got a new map into her head, never learned the way to the grocery store half a block away on the other side of the street or the layout of the building or even her own apartment. She

couldn't. Even crossing the street was dangerous, both because **she** wasn't looking for cars and because once **she** got to the other side **she**'d have no idea how **she** got there or where **she** was. **My Rebecca's** younger brother believed ardently in protecting **her** dignity and autonomy, but being hit by a car is undignified. **We they** arrived at a new level of crisis that required one of **us them** to be with **her** during all waking hours. Then **we they** hired aides to supplement **us them** until **we they** moved **her** to the residential care facility with the bucolic name where **she** was supposed to be fully cared for and safe.

They misled **us them** about their capacity to cope and took a lot of money they weren't going to return, and whenever things didn't go smoothly they passed the burden to **us them**. **We they** went back to spending long chunks of time with **her** and hiring one on one caregivers. **She** became a geriatric delinquent, prone to lashing out and running away. **We they** tried to forestall **her** solo expeditions by taking **her** on a long walk every morning through the pleasant residential streets with their burgeoning flower gardens. Since the rest of **my her** conversations with **her her mother** were chaotic or perilous, **I Rebecca** talked to **her** mostly about the colors of the houses and about irises, honeysuckle, nasturtiums, passionflowers, sunflowers, morning glories, and the other plants **we they** passed on those walks.

That vast pile of apricots included underripe, ripening, and rotting fruit. The range of stories **I Rebecca** can tell about **my her** mother include some of each too. If **I she** had written about **her** earlier, the story would have had the aura of the courtroom, for **I Rebecca** had been raised on the logic of argument and fact and being right, rather than the leap beyond that might be love. **I she** would have told it as a defendant, making **my her** case against **her her mother** to justify **myself herself**, who stood so long accused of so many sidelong things. Some of the urgency to be justified in **my Rebecca's** existence and to survive has fallen away, though the story remains, a hard pit after the emotion has gone.

There are other stories, not yet ripe, that **I Rebecca** will see and tell in later years. Once the apricots arrived and **I she** began thinking in fairy tales, **I she** shocked **myself herself** by recalling the couplet from "Snow White," "Mirror, mirror, on the wall," because that conjunction of mothers and mirrors made **me her** recognize how murderous **my her** mother's fury was. **She** was devoured by envy for decades, an envy that was a story **she** told **herself**, a story of constant comparison.

She her mother was a great believer in fairness. At **her** best **she** stood up for the rights of the oppressed and at the worst begrudged **me Rebecca** anything **I Rebecca** had that **she** thought **she** hadn't had. Envy was an emotion, and **she** turned **her** emotions into reasons and reasons into facts and believed facts were obdurate, unchangeable things, even as **her** emotions changed again and again. Those emotions metamorphosed into stories and the stories **she** told **herself** summoned emotions long after the events.

Stories rode **her**, **she** was driven by stories - that beauty was the key to some happiness that had eluded **her**, that **she** had been done out of something that was rightfully hers, whether it was **her mother's** favor or **her** daughter's golden hair. Stories were a storm that blew **her** this way and that, but **she** believed in their truth and permanence - **she** had always been miserable, always happy, **her** life had been good, had been terrible, **she** had never said such a thing, felt such a thing, and though **she** brooded on slights for decades, **she** could never remember **her** own rage the day before.

My **Rebecca's** story is a variation on one I **she** have **has** heard from many women over the years, of **the mother** who gave **herself** away to everyone or someone and tried to get **herself** back from a daughter. Early on **she** assured me **her daughter** that **she** had measured me **her** as a toddler, doubled my **her** height, and deduced that I **she** would be five foot two, seven inches shorter than **her herself**, when I **she** grew up and that my **Rebecca's** hair - white blond in my **her** first years, lemon and then honey and then dirty blond streaked by the sun with gold as I **she** grew older - was going to turn brown at any moment.

This short, brown haired daughter **she** decided upon was not terrifying, and **she** envisioned a modest future for me **her** and occasionally tried to keep me **her** to it. I **Rebecca** remained a couple of inches shorter than **her** until **her** posture sagged, but **she** remained preoccupied with our **their** relative heights. Once when I **Rebecca** came over for a family dinner **she her mother** seized me **her** at the door and dragged me **her** in front of a mirror to make sure **she** was still taller, and **she** called me **Rebecca** "Shortie" well into the era of **her** Alzheimer's disease. It was my **Rebecca's** hair, however, that was **her** great grief.

Her the mother's dark hair had lovely russet undertones when **she** was young and turned white early. **She** dyed it light brown for a couple of decades before I **Rebecca** persuaded **her** to let it be. The first time I **Rebecca** saw it white, when **she her mother** was about sixty, I **she** was astonished at **her** beauty, like a marble statue with blazing blue eyes. Having paler hair than mine **Rebecca's** changed nothing. **She the mother** imagined blondness as an almost supernatural gift, one that I **Rebecca** had no right to receive since **she she herself** had not, and **she** brought up my **her daughter's** hair in countless unhappy ways over the years.

My **Rebecca's** hair was dyed, was brown, was unfair, was wrong, though there were a few years when **she** was angry about my **her daughter's** eyebrows instead, beginning with a moment when I **Rebecca** had taken **her** out to breakfast and out of the blue **she** snapped, "It's not fair you got those eyebrows." Giving **her** breakfast did nothing, since I **Rebecca** would not, could not, give **her** or give up my **her** arched eyebrows or convince **her** that **her** own straight eyebrows were fine.

For mothers, some mothers, my **Rebecca's** mother, daughters are division and sons are multiplication; the former reduce them, fracture them, take from them, the latter augment and

enhance. My Rebecca's mother, who would light up at the thought that my her brothers were handsome, rankled at the idea that I Rebecca might be nice looking. The queen's envy of Snow White is deadly. It's based on the desire to be the most beautiful of all, and it raises the question of whose admiration she needs and what she thinks Snow White is competing for, this child whose beauty is an affliction. At the back of this drama between women are men, the men for whom the queen wants to be beautiful, the men whose attention is the arbiter of worth and worthlessness. There was nothing I Rebecca could do, because there was nothing I she had done: it was not my her actions that triggered her her mother's fury, but my her very being, my her gender, my her appearance, and my her nonbeing - my her failure to be the miracle of her completion and to be instead her division.

“Resentment is a storytelling passion,” says the philosopher Charles Griswold in his book *Forgiveness*. I Rebecca know knows well how compelling those stories are, how they grant immortality to an old injury. The teller goes in circles like a camel harnessed to a rotary water pump, diligently extracting misery, reviving feeling with each retelling. Feelings are kept alive that would fade away without narrative, or are invented by narratives that may have little to do with what once transpired and even less to do with the present moment. I Rebecca learned this skill from my her mother, though some of her her mother's stories were about me Rebecca, and of course my Rebecca's perennial classics were about her her mother. My her father was destructive in a more uncomplicated way, but he is another story. Or maybe he is the misery at the root of my her mother's behavior, and he certainly made her suffer, but there were people and historical forces at the root of his, and that line of logic goes on forever.

It wasn't only envy. When I Rebecca was thirteen, my her mother told me her that the doctors had detected a lump in her breast. I Rebecca found out decades later she had first told my her father, whose lack of sympathy over this was part of what precipitated their separation and protracted divorce. I Rebecca did not have much sympathy either; it was not that I she refused to give it, but that there was none in my her equipment yet, perhaps because I she had experienced so little of it.

When she her mother didn't get what she wanted from me her that day she told me her her medical news, she flew into a blasting fury that I Rebecca remember remembers, perhaps incorrectly, as the first of the long sequence of furies at what I Rebecca was not or what she her mother was not getting. I she can still picture the two of us them in front of the terrible house painted with the tan paint that had never dried properly so that a host of small insects stuck to it over the years. Now I she can feel for that distressed woman who had no one compassionate to turn to, but at the time I she just felt scorched and wronged. As it turned out, the lump was benign; the relationship, however, was malignant from then on.

Thereafter, she the mother often visited her fury at others or at life upon me Rebecca. She took pleasure in not giving me her things that she gave to others, often in front of me her, in finding

ways to push **me her** out of the group. **She** thought **she** would get something through these acts, and maybe **she** got a momentary sense of victory and power, and those were rare possessions for **her**. **She** didn't seem to know **she** also lost something through this strategy. In the decades that followed, **I Rebecca** nursed **her** through other illnesses and injuries **she** kept secret from **her** sons, and during the worst of them, not so many years before the Alzheimer's arrived in force, **she** berated **me Rebecca** for not feeling enough for **her** while **I she** was tending **her**.

Sometimes it's valuable to return to the circumstances of childhood with an adult's resources and insights, and that time around **I Rebecca** realized that **I she** could not feel at all. Not for **her her mother**, or for **myself herself**, except a dim horror, as if from a long way away. **I she** had returned to the state in which **I she** had spent **my her** childhood, frozen, in suspended animation, waiting to thaw out, to wake up, waiting to live. **I she** thought of **her her mother's** unhappiness as a sledge to which **I Rebecca** was tethered. **I she** dragged it with **me her** and studied it in the hope of freeing **myself herself** and maybe even **her her mother**.

She her mother thought of **me Rebecca** as a mirror but **she** didn't like what **she** saw and blamed the mirror. When **I Rebecca** was thirty, in one of the furious letters **I she** sometimes composed and rarely sent, **I she** wrote, "You want me to be some kind of a mirror that will reflect back the self image you want to see - perfect mother, totally loved, always right - but I am not a mirror, and the shortcomings you see are not my fault. And I can never get along with you as long as you continue demanding that I perform miracles."

I she had brought **her her mother** a copy of **my her** first book and **she** responded by berating **me her** for not visiting, though **I Rebecca** had dropped it off late at night and knew that **I she** would have been unwelcome at that hour. Had **I she** visited at an earlier hour **she** would have found fault with something **I Rebecca** had done when **I she** was with **her**. And had **I she** not given **her** a copy, another failure could be charted. There was no winning, just some decisions about how to lose and how not to play. **I Rebecca have has** seen people with charismatic or charming parents forever hovering in hope of validation and recognition, and **I she** was not waiting for those. **I she** just wanted the war to end.

Long afterward **I Rebecca** got asked over and over the most common and annoying question about Alzheimer's, whether **she her mother** still recognized **me her**. Recognition can mean so many things, and in some sense **she her mother** had never known who **I Rebecca** was. Much later, when **she** couldn't come up with **my her** name or explain **our their** relationship, **I Rebecca** did not care, since being recognized hadn't exactly been a boon. In that era, **I Rebecca think thinks my her** voice and other things registered as familiar and set **her her mother** at ease, and perhaps **she** knew **me Rebecca** more truly. And perhaps **I Rebecca** knew **her**, as so much that was superfluous was pared away and the central fact of **her** humanity and **her** vulnerability was laid bare.

Who was I **Rebecca** all those years before? I **she** was not. Mirrors show everything but themselves, and to be a mirror is like being Echo in the myth of Echo and Narcissus: nothing of your own will be heard. The fact usually proffered about **Narcissus** is that **he** was in love with **his** own image in the mountain pool, but the more important one is that in **his** absorption in **his** reflection **he** lost contact with others and starved to death.

Glace, the French word for ice, can also mean mirror. Ice, mirror, glass: the glass coffin in which **Snow White** lies dormant, poisoned, might as well be made of ice, as though **she** were frozen like those bodies in cryogenic storage, waiting to be thawed when their disease becomes curable, or those mountaineers frozen into the ice at altitude. You freeze up in childhood, you go numb, because you can not change your circumstances and to recognize, name, and feel the emotions and their cruel causes would be unbearable, and so you wait.

Ice, glass, mirrors. I **Rebecca** was frozen, or rather thawing. I **she** was a mirror, but **my her** mother didn't like what **she** saw in it. I **Rebecca** think **thinks** of human psyches as landscapes, and to the question of whether **she her mother** was happy or unhappy, I **Rebecca** think **thinks** that others encountered **her her mother** in a flower spangled meadow that was highly cultivated, if not artificial, and I **Rebecca** charted the authentic swamp of **her her mother's** unhappiness far away in another part of the landscape **she herself her mother herself** did not care to know.

If **my her** mother had chosen a fairy tale about **herself**, it would have been "Cinderella," the story of an overlooked, undervalued girl, a delicate child made into a workhorse. **My her** mother's older sister was a lively girl off on **her** own pursuits; **her** younger sister was, in **her** account, the cosseted baby who grew up to look like **her** twin but was thought of - at least by **my Rebecca's** mother - as the pretty one. It was mostly confidence that made **the younger girl** take up eyebrow pencils and pretty dresses, while **her** older sister hung back; **they** were nevertheless close and fond.

From the time I **Rebecca** was a small child, **my her** mother would absentmindedly call **me her** by **her** little sister's name, so that I **Rebecca** was cloaked in a jealousy and attachment that had been born more than a quarter century before **me her**. **My Rebecca's** mother in **her** own stories was the freckled, skinny one on whom **her mother** leaned, **the mother** who sometimes kept **her** home from school because **she** was sickly, or for company, or to take care of **her** little sister. When **my Rebecca's** mother was ten, **her** father died in a construction accident and **her mother** had to go to work, another abandonment for both of **them**.

If **she** was Cinderella, **she** was forever stuck in childhood, waiting for help, for transformation, stuck in situations that had ended half a century earlier, a Cinderella for whom no prince came, except **her** sons, the princes **she** made. **She** was self conscious about **her** size eleven feet and **her** height, bemoaning and boasting about the latter in turn. **She** had a strikingly pretty face, but beauty is as much a way of carrying yourself as physical attributes. **She** was thin skinned, prim,

unsure of **herself**, finicky, squeamish, anxious, and fretful, even as a child, in the stories told **me Rebecca**.

Some instinct that comes from being at home in the world was never hers, the protective instinct that attracts you to what encourages you. Instead **she** was buffeted between principles and fears. **She** took the ought to be for the actual and adhered to what **she** should like and how things should be. It was as though **she** traveled by a map of the wrong place, hitting walls, driving into ditches, missing **her** destination, but never stopping or throwing out the map. And **she** never stopped being Cinderella, and told **her** own story largely as a series of things that happened to **her** rather than things **she** did.

The artist **Ana Teresa Fernandez** recently cast a pair of high heeled shoes in ice and stood in the gutter of an inner city street at night until they melted and left **her** barefoot and free. It was a battle between the warmth of **her** body and the coldness of the shoes, between **her** own fierce will and the imprisonment of the Cinderella story. The shoes were astonishingly beautiful, strange, alarming. They were shoes that wanted to kill your feet, shoes too brittle to walk in, shoes of the kind called stiletto, as though you could stab someone with them. In the two hour video **she** compressed down to forty minutes or so of ordeal, they slowly disintegrated, like a story falling apart, like a belief wearing out, like a fear melting away.

When your feet or hands go numb with cold, they don't feel at all after a while. It's when they warm again that the pain begins, just as a limb hurts not when the blood flow ceases and it goes to sleep but when it wakes up. Tall, athletic **Ana** told **me Rebecca** that it was when **her** feet began to thaw that the agony arrived. **She** endured the pain for the sake of a symbolic conquest of a pernicious story and for the sake of making a work of art that expressed **her** fierce feminism and brilliant imagination. In "Cinderella," women deform themselves to try to fit into the shoe; **Ana** destroyed the shoes, making something beautiful out of the war between flesh and ice, between a fairy tale that didn't fit and **her** own intransigent warmth. Not everyone has the will or the warmth.

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My Rebecca's own story in its particulars hardly interests **me her** now. The incidents have dissolved into the dirt from which certain plants grew, and the blooms of those plants or maybe only their perfume on the air, the questions and ideas that arose, are what still signify. Or so **I Rebecca think thinks**, but maybe a moment in the dirt of that apricot summer is necessary. The apricots arrived in early August, and then everything with **my her** mother began to deteriorate more ferociously.

The place **she** was living was not working, the people who were supposed to advise **us them** were not helping, and the three of **us them** were worn out from the constant attendance, constant

anxiety, and lack of any good ideas about what to do next. We they took her on long walks every morning in hope of sating her restlessness. When it was my Rebecca's turn, we they walked around the pleasant stucco and wooden houses surrounding her residence while I Rebecca remarked on colors, on porches, on gables and bay windows, on morning glories, lilies, sunflowers, hollyhocks, and foxglove.

Early in September she her mother stepped out of a second floor window onto the first floor roof of the careless care facility where she was living, because she imagined that she was a prisoner making a break for it. The window had been open for some workmen doing repairs, and she menaced them as they tried to keep her from the edge and get her back in. The next day she bolted through the front door after a brief scuffle, one of several violent moments in that poorly regulated place. She disappeared for a day during which the police in that town had an all points bulletin out for her. If nothing else, she was proving to be in excellent physical health.

My her brothers were out of town so I Rebecca dropped everything and drove over to monitor the situation and see what I she could do. I she went to the main library where my her friend worked in case she her mother showed up there and found a picture of her already posted on the front door. Anything might've happened; she could have been hit by a car, fallen in with some of the bands of street people, gotten seriously lost, gone on one of the several mile walks that had ended with her being returned by the police. When my her younger brother arrived late that afternoon, he figured out that she'd managed to hitchhike and take buses and show up back at her old house twenty miles away, like one of those animals in the stories of faithful return. It was wrenching.

What she wanted was not what she needed. She'd forgotten the thousand fearful crises of her last few years in her house, ignored the fact that she could no longer make a meal on her own or keep track of a key, and spoke of life in that shuttered gray-green bungalow as a golden age that might just have been remembering life before the crises of her brain disease. The house was still hers but there was no going back from the disorder. We they were told to find a new place for her promptly and to hire full time one on one caregivers in the meantime, and so came a succession of blue collar women of color of varying calibers of kindness and competence, along with huge bills from their agency. Choosing her medications was left up to me Rebecca. I she put her her mother on an antidepressant and then when the trouble didn't cease, around the time of the incident on the roof and the running away, shortly after she broke the plate glass door, added an anti psychotic sometimes used for Alzheimer's agitation and violence.

I Rebecca think thinks my her last lengthy conversation with the man I she was involved with then was about choosing the drugs. The crises with my her mother had burdened the relationship, but the relationship had burdened everything else too. It was in trouble for various reasons, but everything had been becalmed for a few years because of my her crises with my her mother's health and his or ours theirs with his own. He'd been suddenly struck down by a

disorder that inflicted constant disabling pain, that turned **him** from a long distance runner into someone who walked as though on coals or across thorns. For the two years before the apricot summer **I Rebecca** was sandwiched between two severely sick people whose needs flattened **mine hers**, and though it was clear that little or nothing could be asked of **my her** mother it was unclear what could be asked of **him**.

He cited **his** pain as an excuse for everything, which it wasn't, but the pain was real. **He** broke up with **me her** by phone a week after the peak of the crises with **my her** mother, and **I she** was furious that **he** was not there for **me her** after **I she** had gotten **him** through so many of **his** crises. Then **he** changed **his** mind, but there was too much damage to restore, and **I Rebecca** was too busy coping with **my her** mother's emergency. The particulars don't matter now. There was bitterness but also relief that **I she** was no longer responsible for trying to get **him** to make better decisions about **his** life and **mine hers**.

A young man who was transcribing the interviews for the book **I Rebecca** was working on turned out to have **a mother** who was a great expert on Alzheimer's and a kind woman. **She** advised **me her** about **our their** mother's condition in the moment and as it might progress, and recommended the Alzheimer's residence in which **she'd** placed **her** own father, praising it as the best place in the region. **I Rebecca** called. **We they** visited. They had openings. A week after the revelations from **the man** in pain, **I Rebecca** was walking **my her** mother around the lake in the city where the residence was, hoping to put **her** in the best frame of mind for the intake interview, when **my her** phone rang.

The call was from Reykjavík, and **the caller** invited **me her** to come to Iceland. **I Rebecca** startled **her** by replying yes without hesitation. At that moment, Iceland, the remote unknown, the back of the north wind, sounded like the right place to go, and the call came like a magical rescue, the most unlikely intervention at the most arduous moment.