

## My Blue Escape, My Otherness of Being

by Catalina Florina Florescu

I have never exhibited an acrobat's skills, but I have decided to tightrope on myself, my past, and loss of mom. We are so in tune with pain, we do not want to escape its stickiness. From childhood onward, we keep a diary of what and when something went wrong (but rarely why that happened). Tonight we will play a game called "The moment we fell in love with ourselves. Part one: Dissection of the self." I close my eyes, and feel mom touching my forehead. She wears her exquisitely translucent, goddess-like nakedness. She assures me that the instant we lose our corporeality, we are evolutionarily superior, that is, pain-free. Then she adds that when people are finally disembodied, they experience the opposite of "dieting," restrictively short, earthly pleasure. People are in a waterfall of ecstasy throughout their afterlife. "Child, how did you find me? Do not get me wrong; I am actually thrilled that we have finally met again. I have been waving at you for eighteen years." I do not answer her. I let silence interfere for fear I might say something out of place, and make her disappear.

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I am dressed up in a suave blue dress. I wear a hat with small blue appliqué flowers that mom has lent me. I am in the high school auditorium. We are about to start our graduation show. There is the unavoidable excitement and chaos. I have just finished first grade. Mom sits next to grandma in the front row. I think that Mari, my older sister, is there, too, but I cannot visually find her seat. As usual, dad is caught up at work, and misses the event. I wear a blue dress to symbolize a flower, like, maybe, a hydrangea. I am seven and a half years old. After ten years, mom is dead. I am 36 years old now.

Like her two favorite movie stars, Romy Schneider and Marilyn Monroe, mom died when she was young, too. She was only 45. Because of personal medical history, my doctor urges me to have mammograms ten years before the age of mom at death. I had one recently. The results were good, but for how long?! If mom had not died, she would have been 64 years old. How would she have looked in her fifties, sixties, seventies? My emotional retina has retained a special image of her, years before cancer abusively lodged rent free in her beautiful body.

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When I grew up in communist Romania, few people had cameras. People used them for special, once-in-a-lifetime occasions, like weddings, graduations, or memorable summer vacations. No one would have ever dared to waste a frame on a person dying. It would have been outrageous and distasteful. Even more importantly, it would have denied our analog camera's main purpose that exclusively recorded edited happiness. In retrospect, I wish I had taken thousands of pictures of mom in order to better remember her ordeal visually, analyze her gradually emaciating body, and kiss her deformed-by-cancer right breast and armpit. Instead, I possess a poetic image of mom. I wonder if I may, perhaps, use a computer's program to reconstruct mom's physiognomy. Usually desperate parents, who refuse to believe that their abducted kid is lost forever, rely on such programs. But could I ever muster the courage to accept an artificial image of mom? A computer rightly disregards people's variable emotions, pains, and longings. All this crazy stuff belongs only to human beings.

I have made a pact with myself to chant daily that mom is not exactly gone. I dream that, at her time of death, she let her body be transformed into sand. Every single time I go to a beach, I touch her, and she kisses my skin. This may also explain why I refuse to take a shower upon

returning home. I want mom, now in a suave form of tiny particles of sand, to find a gate beyond my opaque epidermis. Once inside me, I allow mom to generously deposit herself into a huge castle of sand. I play a reversed, protective role now: I am mom's container, her hourglass. She is the sand that pours into me and makes my body rattle.

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We wear our bodies almost uninterruptedly, from dawn until night. I admire my own fabric, stitches, meat, and bones. But fabrics do break eventually. We are made of wounds and of words. God yelled, "Let there be light!" to make us see one another and start talking and embracing. Or maybe he ordered light to be so that we may undress ourselves collectively, and expose our perpetually transforming nakedness. By the way, when one is close to dying, one is unrecognizable. That person has become a ruin, a site of accumulated lacerations. Paradoxically, even those corporeally stigmatic signs vanish, as if they never mocked an embodiment.

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Traveling back and forth on partly recollected, half-erased images of mom, I reach my childhood. This time I do not play with dolls. Instead, mom is my partner on an old wooden seesaw. We tell each other stories to keep us warm and close. We sip wine infused with a touch of cinnamon. We wear matching turquoise scarves. I recount to her my becoming a mother. She almost faints at hearing the news. She travels in time to re-encounter herself as mother. This shared space becomes our intimate closure. I have recently discovered that each night mom comes on an abundant tide into my dreams, and sneaks out when I yawn in the morning. She is my divine blue escape, my *otherness* of being.