

## CONSOLATION

*a cento for Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer  
her beloved son Finn, and everyone who loves them*

In the middle of the night  
I wake, your face  
above mine.

Oh, my boy,  
the sweetness of *what if*,  
how it ripens in these seconds,  
our eyes locked and bright.

It is dark.  
We hold each other  
as if there is no one  
else in the world.

You do not seem to breathe.

There is something here  
that straddles real and unreal.  
I'm hoping for something miraculous  
to happen.

\* \* \*

I had a bad dream, I say.  
It's all falling apart.  
I'm scared.

*Mom, you don't have to be afraid  
You know how to swim*

I breathe in deeply the scent of heartbreak,  
a jar of spice I would have hidden if I could,  
put it up high on an uppermost shelf.

I wanted to burn away every unhappiness  
that came to you.  
I wanted to offer you  
not just happily ever after,  
but happily now.

*Mom, the rainbow has touched  
everywhere on earth  
again and again  
and again and  
again*

Sometimes love looks a lot like misery.  
It sounds like wailing  
through all our waking hours.

It feels like exhaustion. It looks  
like losing a dream.

But love,  
love stays. Like the scar on your elbow shaped like a heart  
that you got from falling in gravel.

*Even the bad is beautiful  
It is part of life  
An almost violent grace*

I try to turn  
my thoughts toward sweetnesses.  
You. The honey of singing.  
The things that cannot be owned.  
The way that the ground brings forth  
what is green and vital,  
year after year after year.

It still hurts.

*Mom, will you write this down?  
Please, Mama, please*

I don't know.

*You will learn again how to laugh  
Love rules your life  
in the fiercest and most tender ways*

I don't know.  
I don't know, O  
*I don't know.*

\* \* \*

You sleep.

I stroke your hair,  
still boyishly gold.

Your song is at work in me—  
how,  
I don't know.  
The world continues  
to fall apart,  
the cold all around.

I hold you  
for hours till at last

you walk out the door with your small offering  
and throw the ends into the field

*God, you're free*

**Note:** Rosemerry's "beautiful, beloved boy" Finn killed himself on August 15, 2021. He was a month shy of turning seventeen, just two years younger than my own son. This cento (a "mosaic" or "patchwork" poem) is a poem of shared grief and consolation. I composed it using lines from poems that Rosemerry published about Finn over the years on her blog, [One Hundred Falling Veils](#). An annotation, citing the source for each line, follows. I slightly altered some of the original language.

*Dear Finn, may you be at peace. Rosemerry, Eric, Vivian, Shawnee, and all who love Finn—may you be at peace. May all who love you, too, be at peace. May all beings be at peace.*

—Phyllis Cole-Dai, August 30, 2021

## CONSOLATION

- 1 In the middle of the night  
I wake, your face  
above mine.
- 2 Oh, my boy,  
the sweetness of *what if*,  
how it ripens in these seconds,  
our eyes locked and bright.
- 3 It is dark.  
We hold each other  
as if there is no one  
else in the world.
- 4 You do not seem to breathe.
- 5 There is something here  
that straddles real and unreal.  
I'm hoping for something miraculous  
to happen.

\* \* \*

- 6 I had a bad dream, I say.  
It's all falling apart.  
I'm scared.
- 7 *Mom, you don't have to be afraid*
- 8 *You know how to swim*
- 9 I breathe in deeply the scent of heartbreak,  
a jar of spice I would have hidden if I could,  
put it up high on an uppermost shelf.
- 10 I wanted to burn away every unhappiness  
that came to you.
- 11 I wanted to offer you  
not just happily ever after,  
but happily now.
- 12 *Mom, the rainbow has touched  
everywhere on earth*

13     *again and again  
and again and  
again*

14     Sometimes love looks a lot like misery.  
It sounds like wailing  
through all our waking hours.

It feels like exhaustion. It looks  
like losing a dream.

But love,  
love stays. Like the scar on your elbow shaped like a heart  
that you got from falling in gravel.

15     *Even the bad is beautiful  
It is part of life*

16     *An almost violent grace*

17     I try to turn  
my thoughts toward sweetnesses.  
You. The honey of singing.

18     The things that cannot be owned.

19     The way that the ground brings forth  
what is green and vital,  
year after year after year.

It still hurts.

20     *Mom, will you write this down?*

21     *Please, Mama, please*

22     I don't know.

23     *You will learn again how to laugh*

24     Love rules your life  
in the fiercest and most tender ways

25     I don't know.  
I don't know, O  
*I don't know.*

\* \* \*

26     You sleep.

27 I stroke your hair,  
still boyishly gold.

28 Your song is at work in me—  
How,  
I don't know.

29 The world continues  
to fall apart,  
30 the cold all around.

31 I hold you  
for hours till at last

32 you walk out the door with your small offering  
and throw the ends into the field

33 *God, you're free*

TITLE: "Consolation"

1 "Holding Each Other Sometimes Makes It Easier"  
2 "In the Current"  
3 "After Several Very Hard Days"  
4 "So We Read to Page Thirty-Six"  
5 "So We Read to Page Thirty-Six"  
6 "Holding Each Other Sometimes Makes It Easier"  
7 "My Son Teaches Me to Draw Aspen Trees"  
8 "In the Current"  
9 "Hoping His Eventually Comes Soon"  
10 "Consolation"  
11 "So We Read to Page Thirty-Six"  
12 "The Boy Wide Awake Before Sleep"  
13 "Some Call It Noise"  
14 "Now That He's a Teen, I Remind Myself:  
15 "Consolation"  
16 "Some Call It Noise"  
17 "While Feeling Betrayed by a Friend"  
18 "To the Person Who Stole the Paper Wasp Nest from my Dashboard"  
19 "While Feeling Betrayed by a Friend"  
20 "Some Call It Noise"  
21 "Consolation"  
22 "The Boy Wide Awake Before Sleep"  
23 "Now That He's a Teen, I Remind Myself"  
24 "Meeting Myself the Day My First Child Was Born"

- 25 "The Boy Wide Awake Before Sleep"
- 26 "The Boy Wide Awake Before Sleep"
- 27 "Year of the Mouse"
- 28 "The Boy Wide Awake Before Sleep"
- 29 "Holding Each Other Sometimes Makes it Easier"
- 30 "After Several Very Hard Days"
- 31 "Holding Each Other Sometimes Makes it Easier"
- 32 "Year of the Mouse"
- 33 "Some Call It Noise"