

NO OLIVIA

Funny that
so many images
come rushing
crashing
through my head
and they all focus
on Olivia.
My NoOlivia
the only one I raised
from a pup;
My precious,
last vestige of memories
from my escape to
Quebec
when life became too much
to bear after
he died.

My Olivia,
with the beautiful
silky coat
and feathers on her hindquarters;
the coat that
had to be cleaned
in the backyard
with a hose hooked up
to the kitchen sink
on a snowy fall day in Quebec
because she tried to play
with a skunk.

My Olivia
now 15 years old
and still active, inquisitive, busy
as ever;
who once ate a whole
bag of organic fertilizer,
and another time
a whole apple pie
cooling on a friend's
kitchen counter, as well as
that entire box of
Chocolate Mint
Girl Scout cookies,
trails of butter tubs and loaves of bread
left sitting too near the edge

now decorating the flower beds.
Occasions of gluttony,
causes of laughter
or shoutings of
frustration;
several a cause to panic,
and phone poison control.
How can I lose her like this?
How could she be gone
so fast?
My Olivia, my NoOlivia
who once spent an entire day
under watch
at the vet's kennel
for signs of stomach distress
from one infamous incident,
only to end up
shooting diarrhea all over
the poor old Ford Escape
because she couldn't escape
its closed, confined walls,
as I briefly stepped back
inside to pay.
Like some berserk garden hose
spraying its miserableness
from floor
to ceiling
to windows,
to cup holders,
to steering wheel
and driver seat
and back seat
as she frantically jumped
from one to the other
in her frenzy
to escape.
And poor old
Chloe,
freshly groomed and bathed,
huddling pitifully
in the corner.
My Olivia
Dear dear NoOlivia

That damned fence gate
untended,
improperly locked.
The midnight last call

for going outside before bed,
and all four of you
rushing out to
Freedom.

Sweet freedom,
Four canines
rambling and sniffing
through the enticing
smells
of the neighbors'
offerings to the
gods of city sanitation.

And me,
driving with my window down
through the late night dark
calling, whistling
worrying
panicking
looking for my
prodigal children.

Three
returned soon enough
but not you,
The oldest of them all,
How can I lose you like this?
How can you be gone
so quickly?
Oh my NoOlivia
Not like this.
Not this way.

Oh Olivia,
dear sweet NoOlivia,
the one now with arthritis
in her once strong hips,
who requires a small set of steps
to reach the bed
where she snuggles nightly,
curled against my back
like he used to do.
You give slumbering dreams
the illusion he is still there.

You,
who have to be lifted
up by hand,
all 60 pounds of you,
straining my aging back,

into the poor Escape
you once defiled.
We travel often to the
healer's office
who would help me
keep you alive a few more years.
Oh my Olivia,
How could you be gone so fast?
How can I cope without you?

Four escaped to freedom.
Three willingly gave it up
within the hour.
But you, my love
lingered longer,
stopping my frantic heart
as I roamed the streets
as the lamplight cast its eerie shadow
on the Escape
you baptized with the
foolishness of your gluttony.
Calling, whistling,
searching for the flash
of your white chest
in the inky blackness.

Later, in the morning
light
I would be at the Shelter
asking for you.
Disappointed once again,
so fearful
you were lying dead
on the streets
or shot, beaten
by someone who mistook
the friendliness of a large black dog
for aggression.

Oh Olivia, Dear NoOlivia
tears, so many tears
shed for your excesses,
more now than ever before.
This is not how it's supposed to end
for you and me.
I can't let you go like this
You can't do this,
Leaving me with no closure.

Sixteen more hours before
I found you.
The gracious lady
who
discovered you,
tired and hungry.
collapsed in her back yard
many streets away from
home.
Terror, rising panic
was
haunting my day
drawing my tears
Flashbacks of every
mischief
and loving gesture you ever did
raging through my mind
Oh Olivia, Dear NoOlivia
Now Oh Yes Olivia,
You're home.
Home.
We'll have a proper closure
after all.

PLANS

Braid, long and gray,
Hanging over my right shoulder,
Spilling below my breasts.
Yeah.
Oh yeah.

Birkenstocks with socks,
Loose jumper reaching
Almost to their tops.
Yeah.
Oh yeah.

Curious craft jewelry,
Woven by a forgotten
Street Vendor,
Mismatched earrings
Chosen just for fun.
Yeah.
Aw yeah.

Getting in my groove now
For the last quarter
Of my lifetime.
Yeah.
For sure.
Great image,
A great look for
A seventy something
gal.

Kinda like wearing
Purple with a Red Hat,
But not so common.
Yeah.
Oh yeah.
Mustn't be ordinary
Mustn't be common
My mother's admonition
Echoes from the
Memories of long ago.
Buried deep but
Still a strong instinct
Instilled in me.
Yeah.
That's the ticket.

That's just who I'll be
When I'm old.
Yeah.
Got it now.
The whole look.
Must hold on to it
For when the time comes
For when I need it.
The look, that is.
That's my look.
Yeah.
Aw yeah.

As sure and certain as anything
I've ever craved.
Yeah.
My look.
I've got it filed away.
I'll be ready.

Who am I kidding?
Why is it
Too hard to imagine
I'm talking about
The present,
Not the future.

Internalizing this
So reluctantly,
I pause.

Ready?
Yeah.
I'm ready.
Ready now.
No.
Hell no.
Don't want to participate.
Tough luck
Ain't going there today.
Maybe tomorrow.
Yeah.
Maybe tomorrow.
Maybe.

