Benches

Gail Cairns

College of DuPage

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Our best talks happen when we’re sitting on a bench
Just the two of us
And we usually are seeing something beautiful
Though the last time it was just outside of the library
Our best talks are the deep ones
Ones that talk of life, death, happiness

My mother doesn’t put much stock in happiness
And she would never simplify
With something as shallow as “Look the sky is blue!”
But you can tell her anything you need to
Even things you barely tell yourself
She will listen, as carefully as she can

Once when we were on a bench somewhere
And I had told her how unhappy I was
How I longed for the days of being a mother
And she told me this stunner:
“You will probably never feel as happy as when you were raising your kids”
And my heart burst apart right on that bench

When I first heard it
I wasn’t strong enough
To accept it
It seemed too hard to me
Thinking that the rest of my life
Would be in the shadow of the highest hill

Now I understand
And know that she was helping me
And freeing me from an empty chase
Liberating me from searching
Needing me to make my peace
And finding peace because of it

When she has left me
I will be on a bench somewhere
And I will hold onto my memories
And be so thankful
Because she taught me how to hold onto something
And all the time I’m letting go

Gail Cairns