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TEVA HARRISON

WHEN I BECOME YOU

I'd like to close the distance between us:
where you end, where I begin,
but your skin stops me,
I can't find my way in.
If I could, I'd press every bit of me
against you
until I've slipped inside,
your skin, our tent.
I want to breathe through your mouth.
If I could just slip beneath your skin,
become the better person
you have always been,
I would, in a heartbeat.
Skin to skin. Breath to breath.
I match you.
But it's not enough.
I'm hungry to feel closer.
Closer than sex.
Closer than our past 18 years.
Closer than unborn twins.
I want to breathe myself into you,
curve my body around your heart.
If I could, I know I could keep you safe,
safe from the inevitable end of my body,
my being.
Always, I imagined us growing old
together: shuffling down a sidewalk,
helping each other over mounds of snow,
patches of ice. Falling ill together, lying down
one last time, side by side, to say goodbye
to our life, our long and beautiful life.
Together.
Then, the cancer,
the fucking cancer.
Everything I've pictured is unlikely.
Now, I expect to die first. By decades.
I'll leave you alone with all this stuff.
The detritus of a life lived

in a global fervour of collection.
And I can't stop thinking about where this leaves you.
No more big spoon. No more little spoon.
One object left, one object unable to nest.
I will curl myself inside your heart, and try
my hardest to leave you the best of me.
Will it be a balm for you
to be surrounded by my things—our things?
Or will it pang too much to look at them?
You're young.
You have time to heal and fall in love again.
You have time to have the children we couldn't.
With someone new and healthy.
But what of this place where we
nested together? What of the art
we so carefully hung on the walls,
a testament to our love and shared life?
Could this new love (I hate her already!) tolerate
the raw-salt-act of living among my things,
the museum to our marriage?
I count on you to keep our nest feathered.
To surround yourself with our precious, shiny objects.
Please keep me in your heart when I slip away from this body.
When there is no longer a me to love and be loved.
When I let go of everything. Even you.