



Genevieve Goffman
The Triumph of A Lonely Place
Espace Maurice
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Excerpt from GANSEVOORT STREET TO W30 STREET
BETWEEN WASHINGTON STREET AND 11 AVENUE
by Whitney Mallett

When Mallory's mother opened the cabinet to take out a drinking glass, a voice in her head would whisper, "Touch this glass and Mallory will get hit by a car. Touch this other glass and she will be fine."

When she confessed this to Mallory, her adult daughter, during a recent visit, she emphasized that these thoughts had occurred not when they shared a home, but since they'd been living 3,000 miles apart.

Was her mother suggesting that if they lived closer together, the thoughts might have made more sense?

Mallory wasn't sure.

She didn't ask.

But she also didn't avoid asking.

It simply hadn't occurred to her until later, and then, it seemed that asking might've sounded disingenuous. Like she didn't actually want to know the answer, she just wanted to make a point that despite how many miles, the whole thing was crazy.

She never asked her mother if she had ever touched the glass that would allegedly cause Mallory harm. She was fairly certain she knew the answer. Even if you were confident the premonition wouldn't come true, who could live with guilt like that?

Years ago Mallory's mother had given her daughter some advice. When she was small, Mallory had told her mother she must do everything evenly. Touching the doorknob once with her right hand, she must touch the doorknob once with her left. Three steps on one foot followed by three steps on the other. Mallory's mother urged her to disregard this voice: intentionally touch once with the right hand and resist the urge to balance it out. If she were to heed her own counsel Mallory's mother should touch the supposedly trip-wired glass and then see that nothing bad would happen. But it can be difficult to take your own advice.

Something had changed between Mallory and her mother this visit. A space had opened up. A space that made room for Mallory's mother confessing these thoughts.

Mallory had grown tired of being hard toward this woman who'd nurtured her when she was small, defenseless, and otherwise would've died. As a result, an ease between them grew that Mallory couldn't remember ever feeling before.

They went on a lot of nature walks.

Later when Mallory returned back to her third-floor walk-up in Manhattan, and she couldn't sleep, she'd lay awake looking at pictures on her phone of the nature that was now 3,000 miles away.

Dead wet leaves. Damp logs. Fern frond blades. Slime green moss. Silverback-black lightning char. Trunk craters like acne scars. Root systems dangling dirt clots. Fungus like Edwardian frills and corroded cars.

There was one photo of a sign posted along one of the trails:

ROTTEN LUCK OF DEATH AND DECAY

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*This piece is part of an ongoing series of short fiction works inspired by new New York landmarks. The full text is featured as an introduction to Genevieve Goffman's *The Triumph of A Lonely Place*, available through Espace Maurice and Inpatient Press.*