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ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE

NOTE TO YOUNGER SELF

Do not regret
every act,
only a few.

Regret words;
at sixteen, arguments
with a drunken mother,

at thirty-six, disputes
with sons unnaturally high.
With a daughter, learn silence.

Regret most "Yes, dears"
to an old spouse,
but with that new one

drum up bravado
to differ, or to keep still.
Every course is gamble.

Regret lapse of speech
when one word, if not yet
the perfect word,

might have rescued
a poem, healed a soul,
perhaps saved one.

Cherish words.
Live by them, *off* them
better than I.

Accept the curse
of curiosity. Risk more.
Bless energy spent

and reborn in loving
even the wrong
person or thing.

So, admire the vulture
ugly, ungainly at rest, yet
when on obsidian wings

He soars, scans the land,
Clears the dead,
What a useful, elegant bird.

Enjoy your lust for the sea,
mangoes and figs, further lusts
half understood.

Forgive most mistakes,
others' and your own.
Who is to judge?

For whatever you are,
I still am. But
do be more mindful than I

to fix dinner on time,
clear that avalanche on your desk;
not let the stewed apricots burn.

Elisavietta Ritchie lives in Washington, DC.