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DONNA LANGEVIN

Accordion

In a music of
new distances,
like the pleated accordion
we heard at his last recital,
my son and I pull apart,
expand, contract back
to one another.

Although sixteen,
when no one's watching
he begs me for boyhood games—
*Count my bones and see
if I've grown any new ones.*
I count his vertebrae
but never get the number right
so have to try again
until he's satisfied.
Now pretend my veins are rivers.
I make up a story
where the ones in his arm
are the Don, Humber and Credit.
My fingers become a duck, salmon and turtle
that swim down each of them
to Lake Ontario. Salmon
gets there first, then Duck.
Turtle stops to bask in the sun,
nibble the grass
until my son hears the doorbell ring,

leaps up to let in
his friends who hide
Penthouse under the mattress,
say fuck after every word,
and descend on my fridge like locusts.

I am at an awkward age.
His brothers grown and married,
I'm fed up with his homework,
bad reports, walking the dog,
endless bills,
terror he'll get into
cigarettes, drugs, alcohol
as I listen sleepless
for his footsteps.
I need to be free
of loving him so much
I hope he never leaves,
not even to live the dreams
I make up for myself
when he asks me to tell his fortune.
*You'll be a famous musician playing concertos
in your mountain top home.
I'll listen with your children, a boy and girl
who will take after you.*

*Donna Langevin is an award-winning poet and
the mother of three sons. She lives in Toronto.*