

Motherless Day

She was never a box of chocolates,
or vase of flowers—try
as we sometimes did to pretend.

She was half a lung lost to teenage TB,
all of the blood coughed up over
years—thus diminished
by insufficient oxygen,
not to mention the depression,
even if no one knew just what to call it
back then, or how it might be treated.

Certainly not her younger son.

The therapist helped me understand
what effect a mother will have
when she is as distant as her smile—
though only after a final illness
(no doctor could ever hang
a name on that one either)
built its bridge across the torrent
that still flowed between us.

There are grateful legacies too
of course, such as how to find my way,
tastefully, around a kitchen,
improvise a solution
to almost any difficulty with
whatever I may have at hand.
Yet now, as I mark my fifth annual
motherless day, the ads remind me,
primarily, of flowers
 and chocolates,
 and other things
that float, or sink, as they rush
past on the flood,
 just beyond
 my reach.

Steve Bloom
May 2005