

“Be Here to Love Me”

Ol' Guy Clark was singing “Stuff That Works”
dad's car was running like a top
It always did
Stains and stale smells, the dog-eared leather
This time was slightly different
The CD was scratched
Irritated, I stripped it out
and blindly tossed it at the backseat
dad didn't allow “horseplay” in his car
We cherished the moment and shared a laugh
You opened the familiar suitcase
Thumbing the cassettes, one past Loretta Lynn
You danced upon dad's old copied cassette
with that sun-dipped tint and faded letters
a cigarette burn nearly through to the tape
One side was Guy the other Townes Van Zandt
Growing up you loved Guy's songs
You never understood why I adored those
“Gloomy Van Zandt tunes”
dad always did get along better with his “little girl”

Remember that time Mom was sweating through her bonnet in the garden
and you and I were playing in the barn loft as dad came tearing down our road?
Mom, God bless her, straightening on her knees and squinting away the sun
Her lowered, dirty brows uneasily westward under the shade of her hand
I can still see the look we shared sitting on that lofted hay
dad tailed through the dirt and took out two wooden posts
The last of the rails he slammed that day

Up at rooster's crow the next dawn

The wooden fence fixed and sturdy before breakfast made the table

He went to town with that car rolling out of the barn

like it was turning off the lot on a Sunday morning

If only dad knew you installed a CD player

The roads were decisively black

A few nights into first frost

We tiredly found a cold cot at the Loggers Inn around 3 a.m.

The procession started early the next morning

We went to the site before church

I guess both knowing

dad would've wanted us to see it "done right"

We watched from an unencumbering position

Shortly after we arrived, the digger broke down

We impatiently observed the moment

The operator was promptly on the phone

angrily waving his arms towards the tractor

We found shovels in the rusted bed of his truck

Much to the worker's too-late dismay

we chunked out the cold, stiff ground

You in your black dress and

me in my neatest suit

I can still see the look we shared

before your heels flew the hole

followed by my Sunday coat

We missed the service
and watched the procession pull in
we helped each other out

We left on the preacher's last word
I turned on the car and we smiled
Still running like a top
The cassette started in with Townes
"It's easier than just waitin' around to..."
I stripped out the cassette
and blindly tossed it at the backseat
I can still see the look we shared
before dad's windows rattled with laughter