

## NOTES

James Taylor’s hit song, *Fire and Rain*, illuminates the loss of a loved one taken from us before we have the chance to say goodbye. In his beautiful, narrative poem, Will Webster pays tribute to a mother, whose life ended all too soon. This poem may be performed by a female or a male and should be entered in Poetry Interpretation; however, due to its free-verse style, a performer may also choose to perform this selection as a monologue and enter it in Dramatic Interpretation. The key to success, when performing this poem, lies in the narrator’s ability to play all of the moments with 100% honesty. Let the audience see the narrator’s thought process. Some lines will obviously be more difficult to talk about than others. Be sure to use warmer vocals and facial expressions when reliving the narrator’s happier memories. Ultimately, it will be important for the audience to see the love this narrator has for the mother. If used in Poetry Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer when to turn the pages in the manuscript.

My Mother,  
 Nothing flashy, nothing fancy,  
 But mine.  
 You had a way about you.  
 Sometimes they tell me I’ve got it, too.  
 Feels so good to know you’re here.  
 I still remember the day—the Thursday before Good Friday—  
 Rainy, cold, didn’t seem like Easter would ever come.  
 You took me to buy Easter shoes,  
 Shiny, white, four-ninety-six and ugly as sin.  
 Four-ninety-six, our secret. No one had to know.  
 I promised myself I was going to keep those shoes forever.  
 We went home to Dad, freshly returned from a root canal,  
 Laid out on the couch and high on pain killers.  
 Two children for you to take care of,  
 And you did without complaining.

At supper—cornbread, peas, and turnip greens.  
 Nothing fancy, but you made it.  
 I grumbled about having to go to school on Good Friday.  
 It seemed so unfair. I begged you not to make me go.

You said we'd talk about it later,  
But then it was time for your bridge game with the Ladies' Club.  
Dad and I bundled you off, but you kept coming back, Mother.  
You forgot your raincoat, and then swapped purses. You didn't want to go.  
You worried about us, Dad hurting and Richard still not home.  
But we made you go. We said, "Don't worry. We'll be fine..."  
I remember you standing by the car, your hand on the door,  
Looking back at me and Dad, still uncertain, still thinking better of it,  
But we waved you off and watched you drive away.  
Dad has never forgiven himself.



I was upstairs doing math problems.  
I was listening to the static on the radio, when the phone rang.  
An official voice asked to speak to Dad,  
Said it was urgent.  
You had an accident, a car accident.  
You were hurt pretty bad.  
Coming across an overpass, there was a truck in a wrong lane—  
And all I could think about was the time you pulled over, Mother.  
Pulled off the road for no reason,  
And we just looked at you like you were crazy.  
Then there was this truck in the wrong lane  
Coming too fast around that curve.  
Would've hit us, probably killed us all,  
But you saw it coming. You knew.  
Intuition, you said, and we laughed about it,  
But we all knew it had saved us that day.  
Why not now? Why didn't you see this one? Why didn't you pull over?



At the hospital, Richard came from his night job, so grown up,  
And went with Dad through the doors and down the hall.  
I was too young, so I couldn't go.  
The nurse gave me your bloody purse and told me to sit in the lobby.  
I wasn't old enough to see you, so I waited.  
I was lonely. I hated hospitals and bloody purses,  
But now, thinking back,  
I would have waited a year  
If only I could see you one more time.

