

I Am Wearing Stolen Socks

by TJ Skarbo

I am wearing stolen socks. Not because I haven't any of my own, and not because they are an exact fit. Only because they soothe my emptiness inside. The owner of these socks I have robbed, will never miss them, they were tossed aside because of the hole in the toe of one. I think they are perfect with this imperfection; it's only an indication of wear and tear, something that defines us all. They belong to my absent son. I am amazed at how simple cotton can seem to fill the loneliness in my heart, as though it knows I need to feel closer to him, by any means necessary.

I know it is only a pair of socks. A pair he has left behind, unwanted. But somehow knowing it once encompassed his flesh and warmed him makes all the difference in the world. For I also at one time did the same. The socks are much too big for me, the white fabric flops about my feet. I smile; it seems like eons ago I was taking a black and white photo of his ten tiny toes to send with his birth announcement. Yet my mind knows it was only mere years.

When is it that a woman becomes a mother? Science would tell us that it's the point of conception, or when she comes to term. I can't help but wonder; it seems this is too simplistic. After all, animals can conceive and birth yet not all of them stay to rear the offspring.

Is it when she realizes that the life she has lived so far is no longer her own? Is it by making the sacrifices needed: staying up when they are sick, reading at bedtime, ensuring the essentials required. Tending bumps, scrapes, broken hearts and dashed dreams. Talking them through nightmares, picking them up from a

party where they experience alcohol the first time, which is a nightmare of your own. Then you remember you must have done something right because at least they called.

Or does a woman become a mother when she first realizes that this child, whom she would die for, will one day leave her for a life of their own? That even though the child is of her, and she cares for them, the child is ultimately separate and must make their own way. When she realizes that if she fights his battles for him she is robbing him of life experience, something he needs to progress and succeed in life.

Is a mother born when the woman realizes that a little more each day, she must learn to let go? No matter when the mother is conceived I know her role is never over, the grip of her hands never fully relax until she draws her last breath...

