

# Parameters

Ani Difranco

Thirty-three years go by and not once do you come home  
To find a man sitting in your bedroom  
That is, a man you don't know  
Who came a long way to deliver one very specific message  
Lock your back door, you idiot  
However invincible you imagine yourself to be, you are wrong  
Thirty-three years go by  
And you loosen the momentum of teenage nightmares  
Your breasts hang like a woman's  
And you don't jump at shadows anymore  
Instead you may simply pause to admire  
Those that move with the grace of trees dancing past streetlights  
And you walk through your house without  
turning on lamps  
Sure of the angle from door to table, from table to staircase  
Sure of the number of steps, seven to the landing  
Two to turn right then seven more  
Sure you will stroll serenely on the moving walkway of memory  
Across your bedroom and collapse with a sigh onto your bed  
Shoes falling thunk thunk onto the floor  
And there will be no strange man, suddenly all that time sitting there  
Sitting there on what must be the prize chair  
In your collection of uncomfortable chairs with a wild look in his eyes  
And hands that you cannot see, holding what? You do not know  
So sure are you of the endless drumming  
rhythm of your isolation  
That you are painfully slow to adjust  
If only because yours is not that genre of story  
Still and again, life cannot muster the stuff of movies  
No bullets shattering glass instead fear sits patiently  
Fear almost smiles when you finally see him  
Though you have kept him waiting for thirty-three years  
And now he has let himself in  
And he has brought you fistfuls of teenage nightmares  
Though you think you see, in your naivete that he is empty handed  
And this brings you great relief at the time  
New as you are, really, to the idea that  
Even after you've long since gotten used to the parameters  
They can all change  
While you're out one night having a drink with a friend  
Some big hand may be turning a big dial  
Switching channels on your dreams  
Until you find yourself lost in them  
And watching your daily life with the sound off  
And of course having cautiously turned down the flame under  
your eyes

There are more shadows around everything  
Your vision, a dim flashlight  
That you have to shake all the way to the outhouse  
Your solitude elevating itself like the spirit of the dead  
Presiding over your supposed repose, not really sleep at all  
Just a sleeping position and a series of suspicious sounds  
A clanking pipe, a creaking branch, the footfalls of a cat  
All of this and maybe  
The swish of the soft leather of your intruder's coat  
As you walk him step by step back to the door  
Having talked him down off the ledge of a very bad idea  
Soft leather, big feet, almond eyes  
The kinds of details the police officer would ask for later  
With his clipboard and his pistol in your hallway

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