

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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