

Suzanne Stutman

The Secret

I think about you, my mother, every day. And I wish that you could be my mother and not some stranger who only exists in my heart, in my deepest dreams. When I told you what happened so long ago, you didn't listen. And then you turned away again, as you had turned away from me so many years ago when I was just a very little girl. As I bring back the memories, jagged and bloody, from my past, I wonder where you were. How could you have not known? There were so many signs.

Always I have hated sheets. When I was just a young mother myself I would wonder in some deep recess of my mind why I hated so to fold them. And now I remember. For night after night it seemed to me, year after year, I would steal into the bathroom after he had left my room, sheets from my bed carried like a huge stuffed bunny within my arms, held against my stomach, and push them into the hamper. Then would begin the quick and furtive correction, either new sheets rearranged as best I could, or a towel to cover the spots, the wet, the smell, the secret. And you never found out the secret. Because you already knew the secret. You had made your decision not to see, for if you told you would be revealing a secret that would tear apart the fabric of things. I was not important enough or loved enough to be worth the consequences. So I remained from then to now, bleeding from my heart and from my eyes, with no one to see.