

## Then and Now

Then  
My mother died  
Twelve years growth on my bones  
Father and stepmother  
Took brother and me  
Away  
To live in a trailer  
In a small Wyoming town

And the polio epidemic arrived  
Iron lungs  
Impossible to imagine  
Frightened children's eyes  
Staring at the ceiling  
Machine breathing for them

Every day my stepmother  
Packed a lunch  
Loaded four kids in the car  
Took off to the east  
For rock hunting  
Or into the mountains  
For fishing

Every day  
Every day  
Every day  
For months on end  
Out of polio's reach  
Out of contact with others  
Away  
Away  
Away

For me, grief so raw  
A meditation for my mother  
Keep my eyes on the ground  
To spy moss agate  
In old stream beds  
To spy jade and petrified wood  
Among the sage and tumbleweeds  
To spy arrowheads  
In old tepee rings  
Learning the thrill  
Of the find

A meditation for my mother  
Keep my eyes on the water  
Bait the hook  
Understand the cast  
Look for the quiet  
Watch the ripples  
Feel the bite  
Set the line  
Hook a trout  
Learning the thrill  
Of the catch

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Now  
Needing to keep  
Safe from the virus  
No contact with others  
Alone  
Alone  
Alone

Alone in my house  
Alone in my car  
Alone in an office  
Respect others  
Social distancing  
Mask  
Gloves  
Staying away  
Away  
Away  
Away

Meditate  
On the bush  
Outside the kitchen window  
So many birds  
Hummers  
Goldfinch  
Why that bush

Meditate  
On life  
Remembering  
Working to understand  
Keeping news at bay  
For sanity

Blue Sky  
Bright Sun  
Cool Moon  
Scudding Clouds  
Wet Wet Rain

Read  
Read  
Read  
Voraciously  
Completely  
Discovering  
The wonder of it again

~ Jill Thurston 2020 ~