

Weight of Home

I didn't have a cell phone yet. You called on the landline. I thought I had finally climbed out of the barrel but your voices on the other end of the line pulled me back. One shoe at a storage unit in East New York. Blue platform with an astronaut design embossed onto the suede. The astronaut had a backpack and was approaching a landing on a white moon along my shoe's surface. I left it there with all of our other possessions smashed together in boxes: childhood drawings, your expensive rug crumpled and shoved into a broken cardboard box. Dresses, appliances, single shoes. All my clothes in boxes like an estate sale when someone dies. I don't remember dying. I didn't want any of the things. I wanted some sort of unity, identification from the people who granted us brief permission to look at twenty-one years of our objects (now collateral for back rent) and allowed us one hour to take what we needed. I only know I had my poetry notebooks. They hadn't been evicted. Outside in the daylight, you sat on a stoop in East New York, 1997. A young woman sat next to you. Where did she come from? She may have been there all along waiting to get a glimpse of things that once mattered to her too or you just sat down on a stoop and talked to a young woman smoking. What she said to you is clear in my memory. She told you her birth control hadn't worked and she was pregnant again. It was like the two of you had known each other much longer than this moment. Two women—I watched both of you talk. Sometimes, crisis brings people to the root of being & we remove our masks. You managed to listen with a nurturing voice of non-judgement. Mothering her in a way you never mothered me. Newport smoke filled the street air. My hair in my face, eyes squinting. I left everything there, moved forward to a life with fewer things and only once in a while I think of that blue suede platform shoe with the astronaut I left behind.