

**It's about a Sweater**

Berkeley, November 16, 2002

Dear S.,

I am returning this sweater to you in this package addressed to the last place I know you lived. Yes, it is an old sweater that maybe you don't remember, or if you do, the burden of claiming it from me was too formidable... I understand. I could not imagine trying to contact you since the day you left.

But, seriously, I didn't steal it from you! It has been carefully kept in what had once been our common closet, but now that I want to clean up, to make space, to draw a line between now and the past, I have to return it to its proper owner. You had left it there, as if you wanted to leave it there, perhaps because you didn't want to bother asking me whether it was yours or mine. I remember it as yours. I remember finding it on top of my other sweaters, and I was glad at the time to have found something to hold on to, you know, as a kind of souvenir.

Yes, I know it is not proper to remind an ex-lover of the grief one suffers after a separation, and I imagine you may already have crumpled this letter into a ball and thrown it into the basket as you always did. Always a slam dunk. Somehow I am feeling right now as if I had taken that plunge and landed where you intended me to. And now that I know the rest of my words will be left unread, I can continue to pretend I am making sense of all this.

The sweater looks like a vintage item now, and I wouldn't be surprised if you saw that style making a come back in fashion! Do you remember that vintage clothing store on Telegraph we used to go to on Sundays, browsing through old stuff we had seen in movies or that we had been told our parents wore? It's still there, as you probably know.

By my own fault, your sweater did not carry your scent. I, the ever obsessive one, routinely sprinkled woolens with moth

balls (oh, how you hated that!). I regretted that the day I needed a part of you near me.

Maybe you'll disagree with me that the sweater, your sweater, finally returned to you today – I can see your eyes rolling, but rest assured that I am not asking you anything in reply. I didn't finish that sentence, I apologize. I wanted to say that your sweater had survived the years quite well, considering that I wore it almost every day. Well, not every day, for I washed it regularly and as you know hand washing and drying always takes a couple of days. I just remember pushing it through the cold suds. I believe that's how my hands have these cramps now. The doctor said it was called De Quervain's hand cramps, also known as washerwoman cramps. Why did I not use the cold and delicate cycle of the washing machine, I don't know. In retrospect, it's really not worth one's time and effort – and now, pain – to try to perfectly wash a sweater if at the end, when it no longer serves as a souvenir, it is too good to

throw away. I guess I could have given it to Out of the Closet – what an apt name, isn't it? Perhaps that's what you will do. I don't recommend holding on to old stuff like that. It keeps one's mind busy with no purpose whatsoever.

Knowing that you're not reading this, I don't have to ask you to send news or anything that would be considered emotional blackmail. I imagine your reaction, seeing your old sweater, perhaps even putting it on – supposing you didn't gain weight. Rest assured it no longer means anything to me. In fact, nothing does matter to me any more. Even these last words of mine that you're not reading are on their way to the garbage dump – maybe the recycling mill, if it went that way. It was just a nice thought, that perhaps this sweater would survive us and provide more years of softness and warmth to someone else, completely detached from our history. A rebirth, somehow.

Yours, forever...

M.