

How to Leave Mothering

You can't
when all of a sudden
your children age
you've stopped buying
baby powder pablum diapers
you've stopped folding piles of bluejeans
and listening for teenage nighttime footsteps

Bite your tongue
you can't say you forgot your mittens your homework your manners

Only think of the sweet smell of a tiny baby fresh bathed pajama-clad bodies
reading aloud giggles from tickling goodnight kisses
think of a door bursting open "I'm home I've brought a friend any cookies?"
think of their glowing faces after they jumped in a jolly jumper first drank
through a straw
printed their name hammered a nail skipped bounced a ball played Twinkle
Twinkle
Little Star on the piano rode a wobbling two-wheeler watched fireworks
made Rice Krispie squares put a pony over a jump emerged from puberty
played old maid
monopoly poker got their drivers license went on their first date graduated
from high school from university married gave you grandchildren

Quote anything correctly to them shorten your stories don't talk about *your*
life unless you've been robbed taken to the hospital won a lottery or award
preface statements with "dear"

Think about Christmas when they were young how tired you were bite your
tongue in daughters' or sons' kitchens where turkey is still turkey on
someone else's platter

Think of those late night talks at the kitchen table with tea and cookies when
they asked *your* advice now *they* dispense it bite your tongue smile and
thank them

Remember measles chicken-pox band aids crutches vomit diarrhea earaches
hospital emergency line ups but remember rocking humming stroking
patting laughter joy

You still can visit give them jars of homemade soup marmalade flowers and
books worry about them love them their spouses and children

and bite your tongue

*This poem was written after reading "How to Leave Saskatchewan" by Ruth
Anderson Donovan*