

# How It Was When You Stopped Knowing Me

Category: Poems

written by Susan Rooke | May 31, 2013

## **Susan Rooke**

When I cannot help remembering, I recall  
that the end of your memory arrived  
in a Texas spring so wet it churned the rivers,  
ripped white frame houses from the banks  
and sent them rampaging on the currents  
like Pamplona bulls turned loose into the streets.  
There were bridges on those rising rivers, and  
I cannot help remembering that I crossed them

driving south, looking down to see the sharp horns  
of shingled eaves tossing, slinging muddy foam  
in the floodwaters down below. I drove hours

just to get you, because you'd lost the knack  
of getting anywhere yourself—a block away,  
next door, downstairs—and so, when I cannot help  
remembering how it was when you stopped  
knowing me, I recall that I came for you to guide  
you through the rushing streets of your newly  
foreign, unfamiliar land, that metaphorical Pamplona,  
not as just a native steering a tourist through  
the crowd, but as if I'd been your child, as if you  
were still my mother, as if I'd loved you all my life,  
as if you'd once remembered me.

## **About the poet:**

Susan Rooke is a Pushcart Prize-nominated writer living in Austin, Texas. She has recent or forthcoming poems in [Time of Singing](#), [Your Daily Poem](#), [Halfway Down the Stairs](#), [Rose Red Review](#), [San Pedro River Review](#) and elsewhere.

## **About the poem:**

“A loved one’s dementia is heartbreaking to witness. The progression of the disease creates what seems to be a series of smaller, incremental deaths before culminating in the death of the physical body. When the person who treasured you most in life has forgotten who you are, it feels as if everything you believed to be solid has broken loose and washed away. During a violent spring more than ten years ago, this is what happened to me.”

## **Poetry editors:**

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer