BEFORE YOU WERE MINE



Carol Ann Duffy

WHAT HAPPENS? A daughter imagines her mother's youthful life before motherhood.

BIG IDEA **A daughter's imaginative love recovers the mother's independent youth while questioning a child's possessive claims.**

FOUR EVIDENCE FRAGMENTS · ZOOM IN, THEN EXPLAIN

"Marilyn"

Cultural allusion

A film-star comparison makes the remembered young woman glamorous.

"possessive"

Self-description

The speaker recognises her own childhood claim on the mother.

"ghost"

Metaphor

Memory brings back an earlier identity that cannot be physically recovered.

"sparkle"

Dynamic verb

The ending preserves vitality rather than reducing the woman to a parental role.

FORM

Four five-line stanzas in free verse; direct address crosses between imagined photographs and personal memory.

CONTEXT

Duffy looks beyond the role of mother to a woman's social life, glamour and desires before her child existed.

COMPARE IT WITH…

Eden Rock: imagined parental youth.
Follower: admiration and changing perspective.

VOICE, TONE & FEELINGS · FOLLOW THE SHIFTS

Young woman and friends

PLAYFUL AND ADMIRING

The daughter pictures a lively identity from before her own birth.

Imagined past and memory

AFFECTIONATELY POSSESSIVE

The speaker recognises both the mother's freedom and the demands motherhood brought.

Dancing recollection

CELEBRATORY

Movement keeps the youthful woman imaginatively alive across time.

FULL POEM: use your anthology. Evidence fragments are prompts for close reading.

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