

## Dumb and Brave

“The intimacy of 19, 20, and 21 is not like any you ever experience again.  
It’s very deep and very narrow. You are dumb and brave,  
and maybe they are the same thing.” --Mary Rodgers, *Shy*

Dumb and brave. Maybe they are the same thing.  
Dumb, but you thought you were smart about life.  
Brave, but you thought you were shy and frightened.  
You were all those things. He was all those things.

Fifty years on, you keep in touch sometimes.  
He saw the name of your town on a truck.  
You ask if you can quote his latest essay  
in your class. You don’t really need to ask.

Still courteous to a fault, both of you.  
Quickened breath, feeling around, unkind, kind,  
despite tossing your love in the gutter,  
despite happy marriages, decades long.

You could meet again, but you don’t. Who knows why.  
Mystery keeps things alive, that and kindness.

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