

The Empty Chair

Laura Bestler

Many years
An empty chair
Sitting
From my childhood kitchen
Sitting at the kitchen table
Dark walnut wood
Wooden dowels woven with rattan

Unravelling

Peas on my plate
Timer running

Ding

Mom moved out
The chair stayed

Empty

House lost
Bankruptcy
Moving out
My father gave me the chair
The empty chair
Brought to college
Art student
Pell Grant
The chair sat

Sad

Worked four jobs
Over-involved
Over-achiever
Chalking
Oppression
War of words
War of necessity?
Recession
Graduation

Jobless

Minnesota
Furniture sales
American dream during a recession
Overpriced suburban living room apartment

Voiceless

An option
Graduate school
No clue
Paid to work with students
Chair packed in a Ryder truck

Michigan

60 minute drive
10 to 20 inches of lake effect snow
70 hours of work a week
Hours of reading

Writing

Designing
Late night programs
Comfortable setting
The chair held a book bag

Vigor

Iowa
Small private college
Old musty residence hall
Dispensable people
Disposable ideas
Voiceless

Gone

Big 12
Infinite hours
Worked
Learned
Knew
Oppression
Anxiety
Emergency dean calls

Accidents
Suicides
Tragedies
Sad news
Families
Friends
Tears
Mourned
Depression

Fatigue

Chair
No voice

Empty

Left campus
Left dreams
Left comfort
The right reason
The chair stood

Breathe

Took the bus
Empty faces
Empty houses
Empty chairs
My job

My school
My relationship

Disconnected

I chose to return to school
I chose to come back to campus
I chose to leave my husband

He left
Empty house
Chair transformed to a nightstand

Dream

Write
Design
Create
Collaborate
Connected
My chair is filled

Voice