

Mickey 7
by Jessica Anderson

There's a cardboard box in the back of my mind
taped shut, scribbled across
Childhood Memories DO NOT OPEN.
And so I let it be.
Some 20 years later, eating breakfast one morning
I remember the box in the back of my mind.
~~DO NOT OPEN.~~ And so I tear the tape.
The box pops open, spilling out my youth:
father-daughter trips to Yankee Stadium,
my missing Mattingly shirt, boxes upon boxes of baseball cards.
Digging deeper, I rummage through relics:
piles of plastic protector sleeves, a Beckett Price Guide,
Yankee play-by-plays on loop.
But under it all, to my dismay
lies the memory of a single day.
August 13th, 1995.
Sleeping in one Sunday morning, my teenage self wakes
to Dad's happy holler upstairs, "Got you breakfast!"
I grumble, I gripe, dazedly dreaming my way downstairs to our den,
collapsing on the couch next to Dad,
big grin on his face—*early bird caught the worm.*
We unwrap our packages, crinkling foil side-by-side.
Crunches of crispy bacon, melted cheese dripping down a poppy seed roll,
our golden labrador on watch as we watch the morning sports reports.
Dad flips to ESPN, the faces are long and something is wrong..
"The Mick has died today."
The news hits a line drive full speed into my dad's chest.
His body goes slack, his eyes scrunching with tears
he tries to keep from falling.
Foul! "It isn't right."
Foul! "He was only 63."
Foul! "Legends can't die."
Foul! "He was my hero."
Walk! ..silence in the stadium..
I watched my dad walk back to his childhood that day.
I watched him break for a moment or two.
I watched him retreat to the back of his mind, looking for his cardboard box
taped shut, scribbled across
Mickey 7-Save for my daughter.