

I am from cameras, from Best Buy, and boiling homemade fig reduction.

I am from the untended gardens and the prickly cactuses that need no water. The thorns are like the fingers of a hand.

I am from the tulip and the lemon tree from which my mom makes her mouth-melting lemon bars.

I am from lighting the flickering candles every Friday night and glasses, from Lyudmila and Boris and Balters.

I am from, "Do it yourself," and "Don't give up."

From, "Don't read in the dark," and "Stop procrastinating."

I am from the menorah my family lights every Hanukah and the crispy apples we dip in clover-honey every Rosh Hashanah.

I'm from San Francisco, born of Russian immigrants who spent a year in Italy during the immigration, homemade truffles, and Russian-styled fried chicken.

From the mother who earned A's but was given B's because of her Anti-Semitic teacher and the father who always does the best for me.

I am from photo albums stuffed into the closet at the back of the house and the sweet smell of perfume wafting from my mom. - Hannah Balter

I am from computers, from Trader Joe's and Organic Girl.

I am from the soil and the leaves that taste like peppermint.

I am from the ivy hill and snap dragons.

I am from blonde hair and Swedes, from blue eyes and Grandma Dorothy and Grandpa Dale.

I am from friendliness and kindness.

I am from, "Do your best," and "Never give up."

I am from an Illinois church where my grandpa was a minister.

I'm from Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto and Swedish meatballs.

From when my dad got lost in Disneyland, to the time when my cousin was a baby in my grandpa's airplane, and they didn't know where to go because of the weather.

I am from San Francisco.

From pictures popping out on the computers as if they missed me. - Claire Peterson

I am from brown chopsticks and Chinese bow, from Sheng Kee Bakery and bamboo sticks.

I am from the home with a shrine with incense burning to pay respect to our ancestors who watch over our family.

I am from the jasmine flower and the tea leaves grown and picked in China.

I am from Linda and Alan and Gung Gung (Wei) from Popo (Yue) and and Tai Tai (Liu Feng) and Sariyah.

I am from the family that talks loudly and quickly and fights to pay the bills even when we have no money to spare.

From, "Always pay respect to elders," and, "Kneel only when giving respect to someone who passed away."

I am from a country where boys are favored over girls because boys can do more work and carry on the family name.

I am from Chinatown, steamed rice, and bok choy served every meal.

I am from the Great Wall my ancestors died making, the nine dishes my grandmother makes for luck every Chinese New Year's, and my paternal grandmother's gold and jade jewelry I got when I was born.

I am from a wall from my grandmother's house filled with baby pictures of the family, as if I were a corner of the family. From my grandmother's closet, old, dusty pictures that make me feel like I am in her bedroom. - Asiana Duong

I am from laptops,
from Lays and Cuties.
I am from the park next door,
from every tall cyprus
to every dewdrop on a blade of grass.
I am from the peppermint willow
and the lemon tree,
whose sweet flavors fill my mouth
on a hot summer day.

I am from surfing and freckles,
from Patti and Jeff.
I'm from my mom yelling, "Wake up!" and, "Hurry up!"
From fairies and leprechauns.

I am from rain and snow,
from the wind whose cool fingers
brush my hair.
I'm from the great myths of Ireland,
From cabbage and potatoes.
From the great uncle who lost his leg jumping a train,
To the grandfather who survived World War II.

In my grandmother's attic sat a bag of
My grandfather's holding a whistle,
A costume, and pictures of peace, love, and war.
I am from the past, the time before me,
a dab of paint on the canvas that is my family. - Anya Jensen 2011

I am from computers,
from Lays and Cuties
I am from the park next door
glorious, wonderful, it smells like fresh honey.
I'm from the water,
the sand,
as the wind blows through my hair
as if I were a windmill.

I'm from Christmas and surfing,
from Jeff and Patti.
I'm from my mom yelling, "Wake up!"
and, "Hurry up!"
From fairies
and leprechauns.

I'm from away with church.
I hated it as much as cats hate dogs.
I'm from freckles,
from pastas and cereals.
From the great uncle who lost his
leg jumping a train to
the grandfather who fought in World War II.

In my grandmother's attic sat a bag of
my grandfather's holding a whistle, a costume,
and pictures of peace, of love, and of war.

I'm from the past, the time before me,
a dab of paint on the canvas that is my family. - Anya Jensen 2009

I am from Apple computers, from Kleenex and Bounty.

I am from the busy, Marina-style home (it smells like cats),
from the blackberry bushes and the apricot tree.

I am from celebrating New Year's together and brown eyes,
from Igor and Lora and Michael Vaynshteyn.

I am from the electricity savers and the clean freaks.
From, "Have a good day," and "Clean that up."

I am from receiving money on one day during Hanukkah.

I'm from Odessa, Ukraine
and honey-covered blintz, sometimes filled with cheese.

From the grandma who cooked stuffed peppers, filled with meat and carrots,
the colorful soups she made every chance she got,
and the parents who are from clear blue tide waves and sparkly sand.

I am from a dusty drawer who holds with its thick wooden fingers
priceless tea sets made of purple and white glass,
passed on through generations of my Jewish family. - Angela Vaynshteyn 2011

I am from books at Barnes and Nobles
transforming like Goku into Super Saiyan and gliding with Nightwing over Bludhaven
From Oxiclean and Claritin.

I am from the soft couch from my cool living room,
soft, smooth, like a shark's skin.

I am from the ground soil,
the red petal buds,
the earth and trees,
sapphire waves of life and emerald.
I'm from Eid and baklava,
from Samuel and Tom.
I'm from the happy traditions of reunion and people,
spicy food and colorful clothing.

From segregation and hypocrisy,
from women in hijabs and ruling men.
I am a mosque,
from Asia to America,
from curries to rice pudding.
from the death of my grandfather to the life of my mother,
the love of my father for my mother.
It's difficult to fathom, but the old trees are sawed, and new seeds grow,
Yet, another cycle begins. - Jacob Muntzar

I am from floor cleaner, from Mr. Clean and Clorox.

I am from the blue, shady cottage, which smells like baked goods.

I am from the bamboo and the trees.

I am from Christmas and sarcasm, from James T. Jasmin and Christian Passmore and Goust.

I am from the loves to cook and loves food.

From, "Treat others the way you want to be treated," and "Knowledge speaks; wisdom listens."

I am from Christians, with a lack of culture and church.

I am from San Francisco, Italy and pizza and olive oil.

From the three hours' drive to Grandfather's house, the soft, good smelling, good house, and the park lanes, grass, and an asphalt lot.

I am from the wall and boxes of pictures, grandparents' silver dollars, were saved for a very long time. - Andre Jasmin, 2011

I am from a messy and noisy apartment, from Game Stop and Kirby.

I am from carnations and the Bonzai my grandmother and I planted.

I'm from New Year's and Easter,
from Inna and a father whom I never heard from. I'm from the sharp-tongued and generous.

I'm from going to church on Sunday to praying for good health and fortune. I'm from always loving the living and never forgetting the dead.

I'm from the Kupriyanovs and a side I don't know. From Mountain Dew and baked potatoes.
From a great-grandfather who flew a plane when he was eighteen to a grandfather who saved and healed many.

I'm from the photos in the closet and on the walls. They stare at me when I go to bed and wake up. From my grandfather's sixty pound weights to my grandmother's corals and seashells.

I'm from the wind, as cold and warm as it.

I'm from soccer and kickball, as bright as the day and as dark as the night.

Nikita Kupriyanov, 2011

I am from my mom's car,
blue and dusty, always running through the fog and sunny days.
I am from the smell of oil paints and wet canvases.
I am from electrical cords and computers.
I am from stacked books piled in all the corners of our rooms.

I am from ocean waves
shaking back and forth.
From wet sand and tide pools,
full of life and salt water,
full of sea stars and hungry anemones.

I am from the lemon tree,
with all lemons and aphids in it.
I am from the jasmine bush
that blossoms each beautiful spring day.
I am from the windowsill garden of a big, big city.

I'm from pine tree aroma on Christmas Eve,
and a gingerbread house made with laughter and joy.
I am from my dad and mom,
who love me so much,
as I love them, too.

I am from macaroni and rainbow trout.
I am from smelly fried cod and chicken soup.

I am from yellow cantaloupe, sweet and juicy,
from honey wooden spoons, from porcelain plates,
red angry kettle, California dried dates.

I come from the mother of my mother
who lived and grew with her grandmother.
I come from the father of my mother
who lived and grew with his grandmother.
I come from an old cranky piano.
I come from memories, kept in hearts and smiles,
warm big hands and small presents. - Rubina Hovhannisyan, 2009

I am from colored pencils,
from Target and Borders.
I am from the apartment above the Thai restaurant.
(Roasted, grilled
scents wafting upstairs)
I am from the drops sitting atop green leaves,
like the tears on a smiling face.

I'm from tangerines and brown eyes,
from Louise and Bevan.
I'm from the show-offs
and the chatterboxes,
from, "Please," and, "Thank you."
I'm from Buddha's ten dimensions,
from the Science Channel and lavender incense.
Rhythmic chants sing me a lullaby.

I'm from the busy streets of Shanghai
and the rural district of Guangdong,
from chili-laced noodles
and calming winter melon soup.
From the political chaos and the grief to follow,
the soldiers witnessed with wide, fearful eyes.

Scattered across my home are
the family photos, the scrapbooks, the high school yearbooks
from ads for the family restaurant
to Auntie Linda's abandoned closet.
My dusty hands finger the pages of an old storybook.

All of my baby blankets,
the colorful patterns seeped into
my childhood slumbers,
weaving into my imagination.

Goodnight, Matilda. - Brigitte Wang, 2009

I am from baby lotion,
from Johnson and Johnson and Huggies.
I am from the weedy backyard behind the house.
(Huge, dark,
gloomy with spirits.)
I am from the fluffy dandelions
the plump plum trees
that still stand proudly in the garden.
I'm from the bookworms and the open-minds,
from Lee Kai Guie to Jack Lee.

I'm from my mother's womb,
a fearless, cozy, homey nest to curl up in.
I'm from Buddhism,
with my grandma harmoniously praying during the long nights.
I'm a "Shanghainese Sista" and a "Taiwanese Babe,"
fresh, steamy pork buns to cruel bitter tea
From the regretted arranged marriage of my great-grandparents
to the unimaginable birth of my playful and energetic sister.

Back in Taiwan, an island filled with lovely mountains carrying
wild guavas and love apples,
there lies an ancient spirit coin, in a foreign drawer.
Many pictures from the past,
are glued in time upon some wood.
Those moments of happiness, those moments of peace,
are all honored faces that breathed before me.
From the altar of my great-grandma
to the flowers of my blooming uncles and aunts,
there is also me, a twenty-eighth generation flower bud. - Irene Tong, 2009

I am from a 1904 dwelling,
from Facebook and Halo.
I am from a San Francisco Victorian.
(White, gold, blinding in the sun.)
I am from the sunflower,
the blackberry bush
whose prickly spines left bloodstains on my shirt.

I'm from Christmas and brunettes,
from Steve and Deborah.
I'm from the sharp-witted
and the sharp-tongued.

I'm from every type of cookie imaginable from my grandma's kitchen
to knowing every wildflower on Mt. Tamalpais.
I'm from the natural world,
roaring waterfalls, towering granite cliffs, and peaceful meadows.

I'm from the Owens and the Walkups,
from chocolate chip cookies and whisky pie,
from the father who rolled a jeep when he was sixteen
to the sister who picks up deadly scorpions and lives.
I'm from the gallery of photos on the wall
that greet me every morning like the morning sun.
I am from Grandpa Owen's fishing yarns
and the gavel he had carved from William Penn's tree.
I am from Grandpa Walkup's radio that no longer sings to me.

I'm from flamenco guitar flowing through my fingers with lightning speed.
I'm from the depths of the cool, clear water which cover the earth
like sugar on a lollipop.
I am from warm summer days with gentle breezes
that whisper of trout swimming in the high mountain lakes. - Zack Owen-Walkup, 2009

I am from cell phones from Gateway and Sony.

I am from the paint, red brick color on the outside of my house.

I am from the savory avocado tree in the backyard and the luxurious white rosebushes.

I am from the family gathered together every Christmas, the fireplace warming our frostbitten toes, and the smell of glazed ham cooking in the blazing oven, from Rod and Connie and the Blandings.

I am from the quick-witted and the sassies.

From, "You can achieve anything," and "You will be the first scientist in the family."

I am from vocalizing grace at meals either at home or at play.

I'm from Woodland, CA, Creole, gumbo, and jambalaya.

From the knee-slapping fall of my dad in the middle of the mall, the animated laughter of strangers in the distance, and the hysteria of emotions running through my mom.

I am from the old keepsake of family pictures in the chest at the end of my bed of people whom I never even knew existed. – Christen Blanding

I am from laptops, from MacBook Pro and Gateway.

I am from the brick-colored, wonderful view of the gleaming city I live in, from the plum and the avocado trees.

I am from eating dinner at the table every night and animal loving, from Connie Gallow and Christen Blanding and Rod Blanding.

I am from the lovers of reading and amusement parks.

From, "Stop throwing your binky," and "Eat your vegetables."

I am from saying grace and going to Providence Baptist Church every other Sunday.

From Woodland, CA, Creole, French, African-American, German and boodane gumbo.

From Aunt Christen who enjoyed a turkey leg twice her size, with sparkling eyes when the camera flash temporarily blinded her, causing a thunderous roar of laughter.

I am from a golden frame with a sparkling diamond, a home filled with pictures to remember our time together saved mementos to keep memories of those we lost. – Jordyn Blanding