

The Stranger by Lisa Bock

I was the stranger.
A strange young girl from an uncertain background.
I met your son.
We fell in love.
You were patient,
You held your breath, waiting.
Waiting for puppy love to go away.
But the love grew stronger,
And the stranger became less strange.

I grew to love you, too.
Your ways were never strange to me.
I saw the bonds within the family,
I was awed by your commitment to the House of Israel,
I was inspired by your love of Torah, and of God.
Perhaps you saw this; perhaps you just hoped-

You invited me to Chanukah,
To Passover. To Passover again.
To Shabbat dinner. I loved the holidays.
I watched while you lit the candles.
I imagined that I could do the same.
I fell in love with your son.
With you.
And with your people.
I was no longer a stranger.
You welcomed me.

In the Book of Ruth,
Ruth says to Naomi,
"Do not urge me to leave you,
to turn back and not follow you.
For wherever you go, I will go:
wherever you lodge, I will lodge:
your people shall be my people, and your God my God."
You became Naomi to my Ruth,
I became your daughter.

You gave us, the newlyweds,
gifts- Shabbat candles, a Chanukiah,
a mezzuzah for our new home,
all the food and planning for your grandson's bris;
a new baby dress for your granddaughter's baby-naming;
a beautifully tattered, well-used Jewish cookbook,
(with the stains on the pages so I could tell which recipes were the family favorites),
boxes of matzah bought on sale for Passover,
you gave us your love and advice.
But your love of Judaism was the biggest gift of all.

Thank you, mom.