Bereavement in Our Kitchen

There are things I hate to love in you,
like the constant drone of New Order’s *Brotherhood* album
when you cooked dinner
and the way you never smiled when you sang,
even at weddings, on car rides.
Your dull brown eyes,
no glimpse of earth or
amber, spark,
just plain and small and severely unphased.
I didn’t like that you put up with lukewarm drip
coffee and wore jackets when it wasn’t cold.
You always made the same recipes,
and you never once
opened any of those expensive
*Better Homes* cookbooks I bought you.
You forgot to blow out candles
and only went on walks when it was too dark.
I think you liked keeping me scared.

There are whispers of you in the kitchen,
from the empty hand towel rack to the
half used expired creamer
in the fridge, all yours.
We are hanging
in black and white prints
on the gaudy yellow walls, commemorating
the days when I first met you,
dragging you down aisles of books I had never read,
days when I was trying to like the
cassette tapes you made me.
Your lips were chapped and you never shared
your coffee.
You had the same tweed coat and would sing softly
with the tabletop radio on, skim your *Reader’s Digest*.
I hear your voice on old video recordings
that your dad watches in our living room.
I entertain powder blue paint samples on the counter.

Now I see there was some light in your frown,
in your eyes,
when you tried to match Bernard Sumner’s voice,
so quiet.

Your jacket is still on your chair,
and I can’t drink coffee anymore.
I light brown sugar candles, go on walks while they burn.
I am trying to read all those books I never read,
I am listening to “As It Was When It Was”
on repeat when all the people who claimed they knew you
are gone and I am left with discounted sheet cakes
and aluminum trays of microwave lasagna.
You are in the mirrors and humming in the halls,
your mom leaves with
pieces of you she finds in our house,
coasters and magazines and Burt’s Bees chapstick.
She never comes into the kitchen,
I never can seem to leave.