**I Read My Father’s Love Letters to My Mother**

Pamela Anderson

My father writes to my mother from El Paso, Texas Flagstaff, Arizona

Delano, California Drain, Oregon Ketchikan, Alaska. His beater

car stumbles across deserts over the Sierra Nevadas as he drives

toward construction work on the Alaskan Pipeline. It is April 1954.

He seals his envelopes *SWABK*. A big kiss: Sealed With A Big Kiss.

*Take good care of yourself*, he cautions, *and eat up. I don’t like no skinny-ass wife*.

He promises, *I will never leave you and baby again as long as I live.*

*Traveled 600 miles of dirt road but missed the boat in Prince Rupert. Am still here*.

In his letters, he is always 31 she is 26. They don’t know can’t

know cancer will invade her left breast and leave her dead at 57 cigarettes

will leach air from his lungs when he is 73 Baby Jackie will subsist in

squalor in Warren, Ohio MS carving slices from her brain.

My mother’s lost letters are as fragile as wood smoke. I almost see them nearly touch

edges but they slide away from my prying eyes. My prying eyes. These letters his

letters are not mine and were never meant for me. I am not born. I am never

born in these letters. I am unremarkably absent.

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