

Twenty-Five Mediocre Birthday Wishes

C o r i e A l v a r a d o

From five thousand seven hundred
and seventy-seven miles away,
happy birthday.

I wish you a lifetime of lukewarm coffee
and unflavored oatmeal, served by a wife
wearing a striped flannel onesie—who
loves asking questions during a
movie you're both seeing for the first time.

Long buffer times when streaming on Netflix. Videos
with incorrectly synced audio. A
dinner table with uneven legs. The sensation
of 100 lost sneezes—in a row.

The world's smallest water heater.
Group conversations that change exactly
when you've thought of a clever comment.

Lots of pre-planned sex, only at night with the
lights turned off—socks on.
Half-mast erections on slightly
overcast mornings. A month full
of overcast mornings.

Flimsy toilet paper in cramped bathroom
stalls. The middle seat on a fourteen-hour flight.

I wish you beautiful children that
chew with their mouth open—who
leave Lego booby-traps on the kitchen floor.

Non-fat milk
in your Raisin Bran cereal—stale
from a clumsily closed box.

But

I will never wish you a woman who listens
to your insecurities on a Tuesday at 2:15 in the
morning, caressing your hands—parked
across the street from your mother's old
house. Not a woman who spends the
first twenty-two minutes of her day
staring at your face while you
sleep, memorizing every shadow and freckle.

I will never wish you that
because I am already gone.