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DONA STURMANIS

For my mother

Slope-shouldered,
treads softly
in doeskin shoes,
sits for hours,
a statue
in the flickering blue
TV light,
watches Dallas re-runs
morning and night.
Presides in her chair
at the head of the table.
Reads whatever's available.
Queen Elizabeth
posing for a stamp,
internal royalty,
Mum's survived
with her stoic dignity.

Before he died, Dad
was the mouthpiece;
Mum never had a chance
to speak.
She is traumatized
by his death,
was shushed
into deeper silence.

Mum reads me
a letter by *her* father
at her birth:
She is small & dark & frail.
We're not sure
she will live.

She's not weak;
she is weed-root strong.
There is strength in
spared words.
Mum lives,
has survived past my father –
"an exciting man,"
she called him.
All that wasn't in her lonely
life
as an invisible, faithful wife:
travel! celebrities! parties!
booze! cigarettes! infidelities!
It killed him, not her.

Mum's thrills:
Likes driving fast
with my hellion husband

Dona Sturmanis' poetry appears earlier in this volume.

DONA STURMANIS

Aging Parent Poem II

Mother wants stimulation.
You arrange to meet
in the downtown park
to see *The Tempest*
as the sun goes down.
She spends all day
choosing green pants & aqua
top,
reads the script of the play
so she'll remember.
Tells her grandson
about Shakespeare-Under-
the-Stars
in Central Park
when she was a child.

The promenade from the
parking lot
to the theatre by the lake
takes 45 minutes. Grandma's
out of breath, but she makes
it.
You have brought
sandwiches,
fresh shucked peas
steaming coffee & many
blankets.

She plunks herself down on
the grass.
But she cannot hear the
actors.
The clouds are moving in
as Prospero conjures up the
Tempest.
When the wind starts to
blow,
it feels like Prospero waved
his arms
at the heavens.
But when the rain comes,
they feel like lead upon her
brow
and she runs for cover under
a tree.

Takest me home,
says she.