
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, reading 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 plucks 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.

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

"For my mother" appears earlier in this volume.