
WATCHING MY GRANDMOTHER FADE

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I already miss the memories I still have. I seek to constrain
them, to prevent, as if it were possible, their loss.
I live in a constant state of nostalgia; I don't want to forget.
I saw it happen, the decay.
I saw my mother watch her mother
fade as her own mind turned against her. Memories slipping

away, out of her control. At the hospital, slipping
she broke her hip. Too late to relearn how to walk. Forget
walks around the nursing home. Instead, constrained
within the binds of a wheelchair she gained weight. We saw her slender body decay
giving form to a new one, one we didn't recognize. Her children saw their mother
displaced, replaced. We were at a loss

of how to respond. When she died no one said, "I'm sorry for your loss."
We had lost who she was years ago. After she was gone we let ourselves forget
the bad years, turning instead to the good memories, let them come slipping
back into our consciousness. We found they hadn't all decayed
over time. Both emotional, my mother
and I fought, cried. We could not constrain

our anger and our guilt. We knew the body was just a constraint;
death freeing. She had become a shell of herself. We had seen her decay,
she hadn't opened her eyes in months. In the end, fork slipping
from her hand, she had forgotten how to eat. Autonomy lost.

So when she died there was a sense of relief. My mother
and I wanted to be able to forget

the times she didn't remember us. But we don't get to choose what we forget.
We remember watching it happen in slow motion, seeing the loss
of the person that was my grandmother. As a mother
who seeks to protect, mine asks, if it happens to her, don't watch her constrained
in the prison of her own mind, as it fails. Instead let her slip
into a crowd in Dubai or Tokyo and don't follow. Death is the time for decay

not life. So I try to preserve my memories through objects, maybe they won't decay
as quickly as my mind. I let myself be paralyzed by loss.
I know it's inevitable; I can't remember every moment. I already forget
what she smelled like; the memories have already slipped
without my noticing. Sometimes my father or mother
says, "Remember when" but as much as I try I can't find it constrained

within my mind. I fear the decay
has already started. I let it get to me. To combat my fear of loss
I seek to trap elusive memories, to no use. They will not be contained, constrained.