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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.*