

Parkinson's: For My Father

The quiet generous light of my father
is dimming.

He is trying to push back
against the dense weighted air,
tries to stay awake, to stay
with us, with quiet easy conversation,
but this is a contest he cannot win.

His thoughts are smooth and clear as the stars
in tonight's sky, and often no closer
to our touch.

Whatever he tries to say bumps and slurs
over his tongue.

And when his body freezes
over the silver walker,
his feet tread to and fro,
and then for him, for us,
there is nothing to do but wait,
wait for the words to come forth,
the tongue to untwist,
the feet to step forward,
And if he sees we have the time,
he always waits. His love for us does not freeze
or tangle – it waits patient and loyal
for him to come home.

I am not like him.

The shame he conceals
slips inside me,
masked as rage. Impatient,
I need him to stop trying and failing -
no - I want his lost words
back. I want to snatch them out of the blur,
to hear him worry, to give me directions
as if I were five,
to hear him ask about my work, my health, my life.
There is an old man here
who was not expected so soon.

The only one who is not losing my father
is my child, his last grandson.
They welcome each other with exuberant laughs
and unintelligible sounds.

Together, they push their walkers
through the kitchen, around corners,
and out the door into my father's garden.
Between these two,
there is no grief.

Leonore Gordon
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