

The Sudden Storm

Category: Dementia

written by Patricia W. Mirza | March 12, 2025

(This story arose from a prompt to write a brief memoir inspired by an excerpt from a poem. The excerpt I chose, from Hafizah Augustus Geter's poem "Paula," was "a storm suddenly opens its jaw.")

The luncheon started innocently enough. My friends and I were talking about indisposed spouses, some temporarily, others more seriously—like milk that had started to spoil but was still potable. Mine was heading closer toward curdled each day, but in small increments. Even so, thoughts of the future were harder to entertain.

My lunch companions talked about caregivers and elder daycares and freedom and relief.

He wasn't ready for me to give him over to a new routine, or a new friend, without preamble or even a good introduction. He still seemed to enjoy my company and take comfort in my nearness, even if he didn't actually say so. He didn't actually say much at all. But I knew.

Then one friend said, looking directly at me, "You need to take care of yourself. You need to get aides to help you get out more." You need. You need. You need.

A storm suddenly opened its jaw, and waves of fury crashed in my brain—steaming fury, white and hot. Streaks like lightning flashed in the dark corners, illuminating the caverns and crevices where I safeguarded my deepest, innermost thoughts and feelings. I opened my mouth and gathered my anger around me like troops readying for battle.

Then I skidded to a halt and gestured to the gathered warriors to lay down their arms. I surveyed the table of old friends with kind intentions and uttered, "We are both doing just fine. Thank you for your concern." And I reached for the last roll in the breadbasket.

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