

## DEMENTED

by Mary Beth Lundgren

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sounds like dented, makes me think slow skid  
on an ice-slick street, fender meeting pole in a storm, and rust  
that pocks metal minute by minute  
until it, like a demented mind, becomes a sieve.

Often now, at ninety-five, she tells stories of childhood—  
same stories, same words, memories fresh as this moment—  
Daddy and his strap—long, black, with a buckle—  
Mama—who left after years of abuse—  
her sister and brothers, dead now,  
and her dear friend, Bea, only reason she graduated high school.  
She describes distant aunts, uncles, cousins—  
“ugly,” patronizing, wearing fancy clothes—  
but can’t remember her favorite grandson.  
Yesterday he flew from up north with wife and two small boys,  
spent hours with her—talked, laughed, ate,  
answered her questions—same ones again and again.  
Before they left, she kissed them all, said to her grandson,  
“NOW I’ll remember you.”  
When she woke this morning, she said,  
“Did someone come to see me yesterday?”

Three months ago she moved in with us, is safe here,  
comfortable, mostly happy.  
She gets angry  
only when she remembers  
that her “good black skirt” disappeared  
or that someone “stole” her small maple chest.  
She cries only when she remembers  
that she forgets.

Soon though—tomorrow? next year?—  
she will no longer tell stories;  
simple self-care tasks forgotten, our faces and names gone,  
today’s home—ours, hers—will be haven no longer,  
alien each time she wakes.  
Her only safe place THEN will be childhood.  
Then, from deep inside will come an occasional smile  
when she sees a flash of memory  
stuck in a demented storm.