

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/2

Sara Bednark

A moment in his eyes

My father rocks back in his recliner worn smooth with friction, the place he reads, watches, sleeps, lives. I probably won't remember Christmas, he says matter-of-factly, snow falls outside the window, but does not gather. I am like him. I know. These moments of realness are hard for him to throw into the air and watch as words fall heavy on my ears. So I know. To listen. Hard, unearth meaning, hold myself from brushing his thoughts from my shoulders, like snow. He wants me to say... what? That it's alright, it's just a moment, that memory doesn't matter to me, that him not knowing that we rode together to get wood, saw deer tracks in the field means nothing? Does he want me to say that he is my father and I love him, no matter what he remembers, or what falls outside and he forgets? Does he want me to say that he should not be surprised, he is older, this is the way of life, winter comes, and sometimes memories are beyond the window? Or does he want me to engulf his anger, explode with rage that what he has worked to build, his power of reason, his quick mind, his all-inclusive knowledge does not gather and fades away? But how long does it last? I want to ask. One week, two, three? Before it disappears, that we visited, you, over Christmas, a trip planned and executed, struggled through so that, you, my father, will know that I care, for you are important to us. The trip that says I am a good daughter, one that has not forgotten all that you have done for me, the checks you have written for my hospital stay, my survival at college, my car to drive, my house to dream in. Those checks meant something, your actions meant something, they mean something. How long will you remember that I am a good daughter? I probably won't remember Christmas, my father says, with that heaviness that makes me stop, know I must listen, hard, to the creak of time settle within the recliner worn smooth, to the heavy words, to the gentle snow. I must listen to him, piecing together a puzzle, one of memory and the brain pressed unnaturally against itself forming a shadow on the MRI, and say what? It doesn't matter. It will all fade, eventually like snow that falls outside the window, but does not gather.

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