

**Wilderness House Literary Review 17/2**

*Diane Webster*

**HIS MIND**

I like to think Dad's lounging  
on the banks of the Snake River  
on a July afternoon fishing --  
hoping a catfish blunders  
across his bait silted over  
at the bottom of the current;  
hoping only to notice  
a dragonfly land on his line.  
I hope it's not wind  
chopping the river into whitecaps  
splashing against the shore  
in imitation of mini maelstroms  
lapping closer and closer  
as wind blasts the surface  
into frothy confusion.

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### SOMETIMES DAD

At least Dad still remembers  
the ringing phone  
needs answered with "Hello"  
or maybe he's Pavlov's dog  
conditioned to respond without thought.  
Every time I tell him who's calling,  
I restrain the urge to overdo it --  
"Hi, Dad, it's Diane.  
Your daughter. Calling from Colorado.  
You have a picture of me on the shelf."  
I hope my name has meaning,  
but sometimes I'm a telemarketer  
jabbering my written spiel  
with every question check marked,  
"I don't know."

But sometimes he's Dad.

PHANTOM BRAIN

It itches.

He sticks his fingernail into his ear  
and digs for bugs gorged on gray matter  
hoping brain cells regenerate,  
and synapses spark the old man  
like a key into ignition.

It itches.

He scratches the irritation away  
like a memory almost remembered  
but forgotten more likely,  
a snowflake blown into a blizzard  
of static drifts deeper, heavier, whiter  
where hypothermia freezes the itch  
and thaws into random cells  
drifting through amniotic fluid  
searching for sentient life raft.