

Kathy Sarosdy

Demented, At 92

--for my sister

Sometimes you spit when you talk. Yesterday I was your mother, tomorrow I might be your sister, or my sister. A fourth hearing aid defies you, shakes free from wadded sheets. On New Year's, you toot a horn louder than the others, clink my glass, laugh the soft way you used to. You fall, break; your body colors itself like a map. *I don't know what's going on at all*, you say. You refuse to eat your favorite foods. Unchecked, sodium and B-12 levels plunge; madness takes over. You point to green slime oozing from a ceiling vent: *I took a wet deer leg and wiped it off*. Your hair spreads grey veins on a starched, white pillowcase. All the time now, your voice is scratchy and loud. I read a found diary page; you recall that tea dance, those couples. You wring your hands, tug your hair. *What can I do? What can I do?* In firm refusal of physical therapy, you squat, hug your knees. Control falls faster away, and in the worst moments you question, *Where is God?* Your well-thumbed Bible stares from the nightstand. *He's here, Mom*, I lie. *He's here*. Too often, sleep takes you in mid-sentence. You tell visitors of fantastic adventures. I pet your head: *Your hand feels as good as Mother's*. You forget Daddy is dead, wonder where he's been. Compliments still please you. Your face becomes the common one the dying take on: all forehead, aquiline nose, sepulchral mouth. You ask, *Am I a real person?* Small children visit or stand in the closet; I've stopped insisting they're a dream.

Kathy Sarosdy has worked as a pool hall barmaid, real estate secretary, bra fitter, plastic surgeon's assistant, merchantman operations manual editor, and, for the past twenty-five years, public school English teacher. Yoda and birds are mini-obsessions. Bird flocking behavior, in particular, entrances her, and she is only beginning to decipher the messages in their undulations.