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## My Mother Laughed

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## My Mother Laughed

Donna Gilbert

My mother laughed in her last years at shadows on the walls  
of her apartment tucked down among millions of  
waiters and students and newly living together lovers,

After having lived a life bursting full of scary things and profound moments and  
pain that could crumble down entire mountain ranges.

She lay on a barren mattress buttons pressing belligerently against her coffee dried skin  
and her leg up and downing to a rhythm in her lonely head,

After having pushed through her now so narrow hips four healthy shouting babies  
whether she remembered.

My mother twisted in her last years her Elizabeth Taylor face into pictures of angst and  
God forbid I cry. . . or was it the lithium that did that for her,

After having driven her youngest daughter me all over creation to skating lessons  
and pool parties and all the while making me feel like she would rather be my mother  
than any queen anywhere.

She sold all the furniture one day in the yard in our pretty neighborhood in our suburban  
Shangri-La because she said she woke up at two in the afternoon and it all made her sick,

After having pined after my father all the years since she met him and married  
him and made new people with him and forever parted with him . . . but pined away night  
and day.

My mother called to me in her last hours, "Donna . . . Donna . . . can you bring me some  
water honey?" But water wouldn't help her because she puked up her liver in my  
sister's tub that morning.

After having spent a summer in the psyche-ward with drug addicts and anorexics  
and girls who had hung themselves the night before, with her daughters getting beeped in  
through the locked door for visits now and then.

She suffered that idiot psychiatrist who touched her child's seventeen-year-old  
shoulder and said, "Here is your glamour girl, huh?" And then sat down and stared at us  
as if he'd hung the moon,

After having combed my curly hair my entire life while I screamed and cooked  
me eggs for dinner and went to every open house and always wrapped her arms around  
me.

My mother shivered on her final day and said I'm scared the last thing I ever heard her  
say before they took her away and we dazed sat down and waited,

After having painted our house and sewed our Halloween costumes and saved  
S & H Green Stamps and put two cans of water in the soup instead of one to get by.



She lay there whitening when I saw her last and the beep beeping of the machine  
was strangely comforting God's heartbeat somehow maybe,  
Her hands whose veins I had traced and loved so much because she was so strong a  
Woman floated on the white sheet, white nails with those moons I always noticed and  
associated with her . . . they her hands went blue.

And just from me to you I can't imagine losing her even though I did and walked out of  
there in a daze into the cold Thanksgiving air and it seemed as if no one knew or cared  
that my mother wasn't there.

It seems as if no one cares that my mother isn't here.