
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Lesléa Newman: Three Poems

Lesléa Newman · Wednesday, April 21st, 2021

WHEN MY FATHER WAKES UP

on that first sweltering night
of that first scalding summer,
soaked in sweat like my mother

when she suffered those terrible
hot flashes forty years ago,
he stumbles out of bed

and lumbers to the archaic air
conditioner, fumbling for the right
button to bring it back to life

with a wheeze and a groan and
a thump. Next he shuffles across
the faded carpet, slides between

the worn sheets, and lifts the torn
blanket to cover my mother
who will surely grow stiff

from the frigid air blowing
between them as she had
for more than sixty years.

Who could blame him
for forgetting she had left
him and was now slumbering

on the other side of town
wrapped in a shroud beneath
the stony stubborn ground?

How he missed her old cold shoulder

*

IT WAS

not a stroke
of genius
it was not

a stroke
of luck
it was

a stroke
of misfortune
that befell

my father
leaving him
crumpled

at the foot
of the driveway
next to the garbage

waiting
all morning
to be picked up.

*

THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR

fight every night,” says my father,
his raspy voice rising on the phone.
“They yell, they scream, they

carry on, *you bitch, you bastard.*
They slap each other, they punch
each other, they kick each other

he’s beating me, she’s beating me
night after night after night.
I’m telling you, no one can do

anything, even the cops can’t make them
stop. I don’t know how they allow it.
I haven’t had a decent night’s

sleep since I moved in here.
I’ve never heard anything like it.
I swear I’m losing my mind.”

“Dad, I’m very sorry to hear this,” I say.

“Dad, that sounds very unpleasant,” I say.
“Dad, don’t worry, I’ll speak to them,” I say

because I am the daughter
who takes care of everything.
I am the daughter

who fixes everything.
I am the daughter who doesn’t
have the heart

to tell her disturbed
and disturbing father
there are no people next door.

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