

POEMS

MY GRANDMOTHER'S DICTIONARY

By Matthew Zapruder

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Save this story



Read by the author.

It must have arrived in the hands
of a salesman whose name
shall remain unrecorded. Let's
call him the handsome stranger.
She saw him through the little
window next to the door
and knew although she did not
believe she believed in such
things she had loved him
in a former life. She gave him
a glass of her legendary tea

and let him go. My grandfather
was upstairs in the immaculate
attic where after they died
I found this typewriter
sleeping among old blueprints.
During the war he diagrammed
routes so trucks of soldiers
could arrive precisely in time
to wait for their orders. Or
he worked in parts. I don't
remember. I can only picture
that afternoon he told me
exactly who he had been,
I hear the resigned
tone but not what he said,
I was as is my nature staring
out the kitchen window
thinking some great hypothesis
that could easily be disproved,
that day now lost in the book
no one can ever turn
around and read. This was
in a little town that was a harbor,
its restaurant a windmill
replica turning in no wind.
We never asked her why she
always stood in the darkest
part of any room. Once
she looked up from her
eternal soup long enough to say
to me you really must remove

that terrible beard. What
is the name of that sort
of love? I want to look it up,
I think it comes from the latin
for not knowing the greek
for the particular quiet
of that afternoon I finally
gave in and picked up
the forbidden ceramic lion
from the shelf, it slipped
from my hands which already
as they do today trembled
and hit the very thick carpet
with a silent thud, exploding
into so many tiny pieces.
Out of the kitchen she came
with a broom and we both
pretended it was never there.
What is that sort of love?
The dictionary knows. I opened
it and found dust. I remember
it had a solitary gold stripe
across blue gray fabric like a dress
you wear only once, by the sea.

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