

Tomorrow  
by  
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I'm not sure who pulled away first. Our visits more formal, less frequent, less natural now. I cannot hear my children. I choose to smile and nod, probably inappropriately, rather than ask again and again for them to repeat themselves, only to hear one say *are you annoying me on purpose?* or *you complain more than anyone I know.* Or worse, *you look so sad...what can I do for you?* I try to be a good sport and laugh, too, when they dissolve into laughter because my response has been an answer to a different question.

I am not sure when I turned into the old lady, the one with slow steps, bad eyes, and failing hearing. Into the target of laughs and rolling eyes from my own children, from other people's children.

I'm not sure when I turned into a woman who elicits patronizing responses from store clerks who take their time with me. I remind them of someone else old. Maybe someone they loved and lost who haunts them with the disregard shown them. I long to show them all I'm a good dancer, a fast runner, but that was decades ago. I am slow getting up and down, or understanding anything easily, except when I'm being ridiculed, patronized or pitied.

I have already been that impatient child with my own grandmothers or mother. Now it is someone else's turn. Yesterday is already tomorrow, beating at my window, startling me with the confusion that comes from not hearing or seeing clearly. Gripping me with the self-consciousness of not moving easily, with this overwhelming feeling that I'm not keeping up. That I can't catch up.

My best friend from college tells me of her myasthenia gravis, her muscles deteriorating rapidly. Yesterday she calls to tell me she woke up cross-eyed, her gaze fixed, her eyesight compromised. In between episodes, we share joy in being best friends from college, in crystal-forever-shining memories of our times together. We make vague plans to get together, as if there are infinite tomorrows from which to choose.

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Author Bio: Jane Butkin Wagner's poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including Pearl; Rattle; Spillway; Owen Wister Review; the Jewish Women's Literary Annual; and the Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine. She (under the name Jane Butkin Roth) edited a collection of women's poetry on divorce titled *We Used to be Wives: Divorce Unveiled Through Poetry*, published by Fithian Press, 2002. A native of Oklahoma City, Jane now lives with her husband in Houston and Oslo. She has three grown children.