

POETRY/FICTION

Poem

TRULY TO SEE

For my father

To see a gardenia, to see
those perfect petals, pale, pale cream,
waxen leaves of deep, deep green.
To see it whole, to breathe it in,
and with it, those that went before—
the one your father gave and your mother wore,
when years and years ago they wooed,
and all that was to be was good,
when all they saw that was to be
was dream and possibility.

To see a gardenia, to see and know
it will soon brown and droop and go,
that what we have we will have had:
Is that good, or is that bad?

To see a gardenia, truly to see,
and know you'd keep it if you could;
and keep this time, this place, this mood,
this talk, this light, this every bite of food,
this piano player playing "When I'm 64":
Is that less, or is that more?

For, face it, we're no longer young,
and once tasted loss stays on the tongue,
turning now to then, and then to now,
turning sour to sweet and sweet to sour.

The seeds of loss blossom with the flower.

—Rita Sherman
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