

David Chariandy

Long ago, she began to forget. It started with ordinary things. Shopping lists and recipes, bus change and savings cards, pens for jotting down those household tasks that always manage to slip away. But then Mother began to forget in far more creative ways. She began to forget names and places, goals and meanings. She began to forget the laws of language and the routes to salvation and the proper things to do with one's body. She began to excuse herself from the world we knew.

My brother and I were the first to notice. We were young children when it started and naturally alert for the smallest signs of adult weakness. When Mother wasn't looking, we'd climb up to the cupboards and eat peanut butter and corn syrup, lime pickle and molasses. Also the most perverse delicacy we could then imagine, Crisco shortening, spooning up the white sludge with our fingers and leaving greasy prints on the cupboard doors and the walls and the doorknobs. Mother couldn't understand why she never remembered to replenish her cooking goods. Why she never remembered to give the home a good all-round scrubbing. We were never caught.