

Saved by works

by [Susan McLean](#) in the [August 26, 2020](#) issue

My visit isn't going well. Dad stews,
testy, displeased by everything I do,
critiques my pasty face, physique, and views,
complains I never cook the green beans through.
I can't suppress a funk of irritation,
but bite retorts back, stifled by a noose
of new grief, ancient hurts, and the frustration
of wanting his good will. Yet it's no use.

Upstairs, I grab a brush and scrub his shower,
scouring scum accreted over years,
until the blue tiles shine. After an hour,
the angst grows numb, but never disappears.
Neither can give what each has always craved,
which dies unspoken. Nobody is saved.