

HOLLY DAY

The Things That Come Back When you Finally Have Time

After she was moved to the nursing home, my grandmother began having reoccurring nightmares of being chased, held down, raped, again and again. The night nurses had to keep changing her medications so that she could sleep through the night quietly, without dreams

so she wouldn't wake up the other residents. "Your grandmother's had a hard life," said her social worker when we came to visit. "She's a strong woman." She went on to tell us that years before, before my mother was even born, that my grandmother had been attacked by a neighbor, that there had been this huge controversy regarding whether my grandmother was a slut just asking for it, and had been leading the much-older man living next door since she was thirteen, fourteen

or if the man, an upstanding member of the community, who ran the only grocery store in town, really was some sort of monster some leering thing that hurt little girls. In the end, my great-grandparents dropped the charges against their neighbor to keep things quiet, put up a 7-foot-tall wooden fence between the properties, just tall enough that they couldn't see the man as he went about his yard that he couldn't look over the fence into theirs. My grandmother

went away to work on the family farm in Wisconsin, attended the tiny Catholic school attached to the neighboring parish and when she came back, after high school, the incident was never discussed again.

Sixty years later, she's having nightmares about being attacked telling strangers about the rape we never knew about, so doped up she doesn't recognize her own children, her grandchildren. "She can't do without the medication right now," says the social worker when we express concern about her rapid decline, the way she falls asleep in her chair when we visit as though exhausted, how sad she looks. "All we can do is hope the dreams go away once she feels at home here."

Holly Day is a housewife and mother of two living in Minneapolis, Minnesota who teaches needlepoint classes for the Minneapolis school district and writing classes at The Loft Literary Center. Her poetry has recently appeared in The Worcester Review, Broken Pencil, and Slipstream, and she is the recipient of the 2011 Sam Ragan Poetry Prize from Barton College. Her most recent published books are Walking Twin Cities and Notenlesen für Dummies Das Pocketbuch."