

Betsy Struthers

SECOND SITTING

So many of their names begin with “M” and so many are or sound the same – four Margery, three Margaret, two Mary, a Martha, a Marilyn, a Marie. No wonder they forget who they are, where they’ve come from, what they’ve done and been. Words choke up on them, they can’t hear each other speak. *Stop whispering*, they hiss. *Well, excuse me*. One coughs into her napkin, one wipes her weeping eye. Canes hooked on chair backs, walkers parked by the wall.

A daughter joins her mother for lunch, is introduced as the youngest, the oldest, the one in the middle. She sits with her knees pressed tightly under the drape of white vinyl, feet on the floor, elbows off the table. They watch her chew and swallow, note how often she empties her water glass. If she wears beads or pearls. How many rings. Now she is introduced to Margery again. Who asks *who are you?* Says *beware of the fourth floor*. Who pleases *it’s time to be going. Take me home*.

