

# Memory

*The first is short-term.*

She knew when he came to visit  
that it would be a short-term thing.  
He was, as always, already gone from her.  
But for nine nights, they slept together anyway,  
whispering an early language for love, sowing seeds  
before he slipped away to another goddess.

Mnemosyne, daughter of planets, she lived herself a titan,  
and  
    rather than be bereft,  
        she bore into the world the future of all great women.  
Muses, and she, hopeful, the mother of forgetting.  
But her daughters, feckless,  
gave away their talents  
for a song, less—  
    a limerick, a lie  
        the sly smiles of men who lusted for infamy  
            but had no heart for the work  
(clearly their father's daughters).

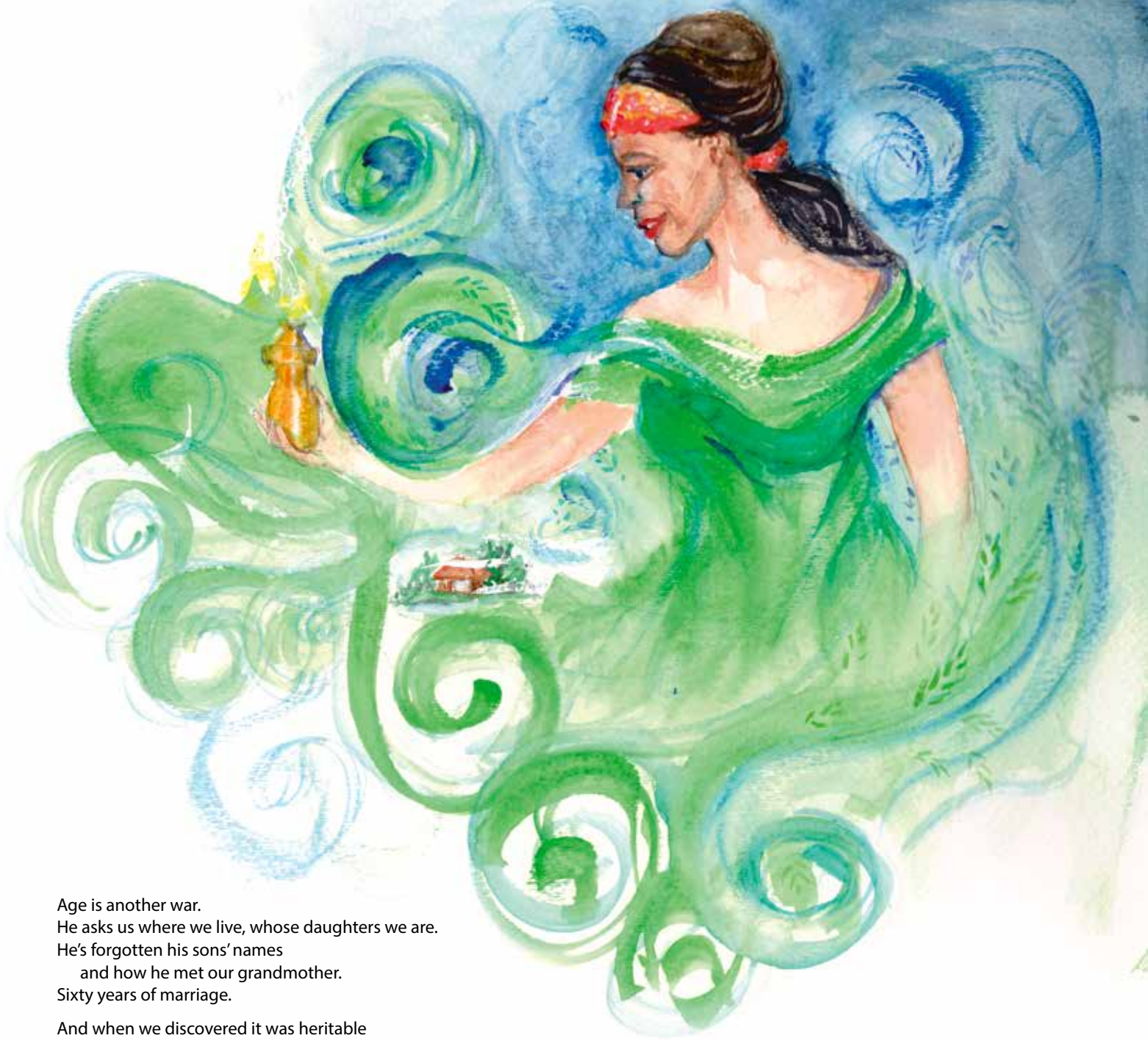
When she grew tired, she took up residence on the river;  
waterfront property, choosing to ignore unsavory neighbors,  
who charged guests an eye and a soul  
for use of their paddleboat.  
Gradually, she settled into retirement,  
    rote, selective  
learning to rest comfortably among tall pines and under the  
    shade of mountains,  
to hold, gently, the world's reminiscence.

*The second is long-term.*

There are many types of dying;  
our grandfather had chosen one, long-term, and set about it  
diligently.

It started with his feet, our father says.  
Bad arches, army training, bunions—gradually, it all gave way,  
the bones straying from one another  
    splayed  
        undeterred by desperate ligaments.  
An inevitable collapse, making space  
for the descent of the tibia, until his limbs were unrecognizable.  
With his arches so went his mind,  
and we looked to our own hallucines, and cringed.





Age is another war.  
He asks us where we live, whose daughters we are.  
He's forgotten his sons' names  
    and how he met our grandmother.  
Sixty years of marriage.

And when we discovered it was heritable  
we were unsure where to direct our feelings,  
just then aware of all the things we didn't know,  
and hadn't bothered with.  
Shaken of our permanence, we wondered—what do we ask  
    a man who has forgotten?  
People's lives are secrets, not because they keep them  
but because we forget to ask.

You know, the thing about getting old (he says)  
is that my feet hurt all the time.

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