

*Judy Katz*

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## First Reader

I used to read to you from the stepstool  
in your dressing room. You sat in ivory bra  
and half-slip, your back to me,  
putting on make-up. You wanted to hear  
everything—book reports, essays, poems—  
and while I read, I checked your small mirror  
for clues. I could tell you were interested  
if your eyes widened or you raised your brows  
out of range. Once—I think it was a paper  
on the *Ancient Mariner*—you sat back  
in your chair, mascara wand in hand,  
and just listened.

Years later, your vision gone,  
neither of us could count on your eyes.  
I'd walk into a room and find you  
listening with your whole body. Now,  
that too is gone. I still see the dressing room,  
your face in the mirror. I still think of you  
as my first reader. Only now you're part  
of the silent, unseen audience. No eyes, no body...  
now I have your full attention.

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