

CAN YOU STILL HEAR ME?

by Janet Ruth

His life was bold as any I have known, full of adventure and generosity. Traveling across the world to help people rebuild after the war. Baseball at Connie Mack Stadium and in the back yard where it was an automatic home run when he slammed the ball over the fence into the cemetery. Hikes and family road trips. The garden he was so proud of—the war against wily groundhogs. Gruff teasing and angry arguments with slammed doors, but never a hand laid on us, except that one slap when I mouthed off to Mom.

regrets
we do know how to push
each other's buttons

In the last years, the world no longer made sense. Questions asked . . . asked again. Mom repeated answers . . . and again. The night he got dressed for church—because it was his Sunday to be the greeter—when he was supposed to be getting into pajamas. He could no longer watch sports on TV, because he did not remember the rules.

no more stories
on which our lives were built
walls in his mind

But our helpless laughter when Mom told us how she found Dad chewing loudly on something, and when she made him spit it out—it was his hearing aid.

--first published in *drifting~sands~haibun* (June 2026)