

My Mother's Bunion

Kristin Stoner

I tell her I'm hot,
and she tells me she's freezing,
that her nose is cold
and she can't feel her toes,
especially the big one on the left
where her bunion used to be,
the one she had removed
three years ago now,
the one that made her decide
to live with the one on the right

because it was all too painful
to be opened up,
to have bone sawed away
in little pieces of bloody white.
Something that had grown
so gradually, so steadily
over the years, becoming
part of her, inside, under
the skin, so she wasn't sure
how to resent it
when it beat with soreness.

And in the sharp hurting
of severance,
she hobbled to the kitchen
against strict orders,
and in her soft voice,
so doubting of everything,
confidence in nothing, no one,
instructed me on how to stir
canned soup, afraid
I was taking care of her,
and she told me there was no way
she was having the other one done.