

DOROTHY OLIVER PIROVANO

THERE WHEN HIS BODY FAILS HIM

Larry falls.

When people ask how many times a week or month he falls and he says anywhere from one to three times a day, they ask again, thinking he misheard the question. He is extremely lucky he hasn't broken anything and the warnings that *someday* a fall will land him in a wheelchair have yet to come true.

Parkinson's disease—nineteen years' worth—is what's tipping him over, but he is among the fortunate whose disease is progressing slowly. He seldom has an obvious tremor, although his left foot thumps uncontrollably at times. Only in the last few years has he suffered significant change, going from hiking trails to using a cane, to two canes to a three- and now four-wheeled walker.

There always seems to be help around when his body fails him. If it's just Larry and me, we size up the situation and see which armpit I should be circling to help hoist him up. A physical therapist taught us a few tricks: for him, rolling over, crawling to something he can grab onto, digging his toes into the ground to gain leverage, using that arm strength. For me, steady his walker so it can be something for him to grab, take hold of his belt, bend with my knees, don't hurry.

The prospect of the next fall is haunting. It has happened in the middle of a busy intersection, on downtown sidewalks, in restaurants and parking lots, in and out of elevators, in every room in our house—the venues are too numerous to mention but are recorded in a notebook he keeps in the section called Falls.

People kindly rush to help, especially young ones. As he went down in front of his barbershop the other day, two young women ran up to lift this man who weighed more than the two of them together. They took one side, I took the other and we popped him upright. Ponytail bobbing, one showed