



If You Do Love Old Men

Virginia Stem Owens

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This powerful book blends biography, story, and reflective commentary into a compelling whole. In *If You Do Love Old Men* Virginia Stem Owens uses her considerable story-telling skills to tell the tale of her grandfather and his children, in the process probing the mysteries of aging, death, and love.

At 92, Owens's grandfather is losing his sense of self, his memory, his once-strong body—he is, as she says, slowly disappearing. But Owens wants him to be remembered, not to end up a nameless cipher—hence the implied plea of the book's title, taken from a passage in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

But this is not simply a book about a certain old man or about aging. As Owens spins out vivid stories about both her grandfather's life and the life of his children, she offers discerning glimpses of home and family, of the love and pain and ambivalence that pull a family together and push it apart. And the history of this particular family also yields larger insights into how much America as a country has changed in the twentieth century—changes that separate fathers from their children, the old from the young.

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