1.- What happens in the story?

A middle-aged narrator drives five hours to visit their 80-year-old mother. They resume beloved rituals—tuna sandwiches, crosswords, gardening, movies—savoring time’s fragility. A month later the mother falls, returns home frailer, and they continue their routines under the hush of dwindling days. She dies peacefully with a half-finished crossword in her lap. At the funeral, the narrator honors a life composed of small, luminous moments and vows to carry those memories forward.

2.- What is the theme?

Enduring parent–child love; the sanctity of everyday ritual; time’s finitude and anticipatory grief; homecoming and the solace of place; memory as a vessel that outlasts the body. “Returns” evokes repeated visits, seasonal cycles, and the emotional dividends of a lifetime invested in tenderness. The story elevates domestic minutiae into meaning, suggesting continuity—not spectacle—defines a life.

3.- Does it propose other interpretations, in addition to the literal one?

5

4.- If the above question was affirmative, Which interpretation is it?

“Returns” works metaphorically: repeated visits as liturgy; garden seasons as life/death cycles; crosswords as the unfinished human effort to make meaning. The half-completed puzzle signifies a beautiful life left open yet coherent. The house becomes a reliquary; food and films, secular sacraments. “Returns” also implies the dividends of love—the yield memory gives back after loss.