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Grandmother Hands

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GRANDMOTHER HANDS

Meghan Dempsey

My family used to visit my grandmother.
She would have elaborate trays set out in anticipation,
brimming with cheeses and olives, cut up vegetables,
like she had not lived through the Depression.
My parents and sister would crowd around her,
their champagne glasses clinking,
brimming with Asti Spumonti.
She would pour a taste into a tiny jam jar for me,
'just a bit,' she would whisper
and place her hand on my arm—
rough fingers pressing into my skin just a little.

It is ten years later now, and she is gone.
The last few days have been cold and dry
And I have been working outside in the yard.
Winter has begun to unhinge my hands,
And wrinkles now push at my knuckles.
If I hold my hands up in soft yellow lamplight,
they have the shape and curves of my grandmother's.
I know that years will pass and they will begin
to do grandmother things.
They will grate potatoes for Kashi.
They will poke a granddaughter
in the side to say, 'sit up straight at the table'.
They will write letters in sweeping cursive,
and button a million small shirts.
They will pick the first crocus
that shows its face to Spring
and hang it above the doorframe.