

FRANK

Feelings move the body around
 more than any muscle or sinew.
 For example, I don't just travel places.
 I go exactly where my heart tells me to.

When Frank died in that car accident,
 my head thrummed, fingers knotted,
 I lost six babies, my skin broke out
 in plague, and my liver grew more tumors
 than the population of Chernobyl.

At the wake, doctors operated on me
 to no avail.
 During that long funeral procession,
 I couldn't believe how the undertakers
 didn't toss my dead weight into the coffin
 beside my lifelong friend.

Yet, everything began to heal after that.
 Good memories cleared warts.
 Acceptance stopped brain cancer in its tracks.

Frank was gone
 but there were other people in my life,
 all nearby, all still living.
 Each was a prescription
 long in advance of the disease.

They lost perspective
 when they opened their eyes,
 unfolded their hands,
 like gunfire
 snapped the cords that
 sent us kids recolling.
 Astride white mounts
 of opened doors and half-light,
 they gave edicts
 to the paupers in the dark.
 With voices louder
 than midnight rain,
 they shattered our rooftops.
 Hard to believe that cows
 chewing through the snow
 to get the grass were them
 or birds chirping
 the fleeting birth seasons
 come to an end.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK ON PARENTS

In room after room,
 they built ponderous mills
 they said were castles
 with slow turning wheels
 and loud and rusty machinery.
 of food and drink,
 out of cloth and wallets
 thin on the money ground.
 They were ever anxious
 to tell us everything is patience,
 to add children should
 be seen and not heard
 and occasionally discarded.
 With weary voices,
 they said we look forward
 to the day when our great labors
 come to an end.
 They made looking forward sound like
 the hardest work imaginable.

Please recycle... to a friend.

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Excerpt from the Book
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Excerpt from the Book



John Grey

Matriarch

I remember my grandmother
 who, after a lifetime of noontday-sun-avoidance,
 had skin like pink porcelain,
 not a wrinkle to be had
 and yet, no mistaking her for someone younger.

For she was old like sea-glass or shells,
 like the outside walls of the Providence courthouse
 or the various architectural splendors
 of the east side, or trees like birch
 that turn shiny silver when they hit their century.

She was strong, not from muscle and bone,
 which were frail when I knew her,
 but of years lived, of tales recounted,
 of people she knew and could, even then, remember.

Other people died young.
 But she lived well into her nineties.
 As her days wore on,
 time found her increasingly necessary.