

Bones

Stephen Perry

The winter demon is in grandmamma's bones,
frosted her hair and made her sleep —
over the cobblestones
the wind breezes —
I wipe the ice from our window
and watch the old mother cat
drag her kitten by the nape of its neck
so its bottom bounces —

I wish it was *Luilak*, when the May breeze
runs along the waves, outrunning the children
in the morning, as we shout and scream the town
awake — stamp on the cobblestones, scare the crows
into shocks of black flight — our parents
coming to the doors and smiling, cracking
their fingers, the bones in their necks,
so the nerves can wake in the still chill dawn

of children — then into the parlor with her rocking
chair I'll go, with her coffin like a boat
on the table with claw feet, like a cat's,
the light from the frosted window like flour
on her face, her hands caught on her chest
with a rose among the lacy swirls of her best dress,
and say, "Wake up, wake up, you lazybones,
and come outside and play!" And she'll rise,

creaking like the sun through the window,
and touch her cold hand to my neck,
smile again, and we'll ghost through the morning
streets of the Netherlands, past gingerbread
houses, with faces lacy in the warming windows,
sun-glinted, diamonds spitting light
like cats on the still-cold cobbles,
and through all the panes of suns we'll vanish

into light.