

## Kissing Gramma Jean

---

*Jay Prefontaine*

If you were to sit up or roll over,  
give me your hand as a sign,  
the charms dangling from the bracelet  
looped around the stiff hollow stick  
that is your forearm  
would make music,  
the only sound in this room  
where a stranger has placed you  
in a cold satin bed, your lips  
sewn and your hands neatly folded.

We children of children gather round you  
and stare. Tracy and Robin snivel,  
then whine. Lori howls, but only once.  
Craig stares, blinks.  
My brothers bow their chins.  
I'm thinking I want to crack your skull  
open, share your brains with the kin.

I want your heart on a silver platter.  
And your liver, too.  
Let's pass them around the room.  
Let's sing, dance. Scream. Do something!  
But this room is stuffed with family,  
friends, your seventy-seven year old lover,  
who sit glassy-eyed and numbed.

Why can't we douse you and your box  
with gas, float you onto the pond  
behind your house, let you burst  
into bright orange and yellow flames?  
You loved to sit and watch that pond.

Elbow to elbow, we stand and stare some more.  
They are watching for your chest to rise,  
for a smile to tear from those lips,  
your magnified eyes to open  
as your face turns to us:  
Come now, everything will be all right.  
My hand touches your arm again.  
There's nothing inside you. You're gone.

I want to steal your arm, slip it  
into my pocket and take it home  
to Lady, because you would,  
you spoiled her rotten.  
Lady would bark for your arm.  
Lady would go fetch it,  
if I threw it across the yard.  
Lady would gnaw that arm,  
get down to the bone  
in a final celebration of you.

I need a way to say good-bye,  
but the stranger informs us  
it's time to move along...  
the children are next in line.  
You must be bored, disappointed.  
You're somewhere in this room,  
flying around maybe, I don't know.  
And you're saying, *Kiss me. Kiss me,*  
*good-bye.* So I do.

JAY PREFONTAINE

I lean over you  
and my eyes close  
as my face drops to yours,  
our lips joining  
my living with your dead.  
I know you're smiling  
at my wishing you were in there.  
You laugh and dare me  
to lift you out of the coffin.  
You want that last dance.  
But everyone knows I can't.  
So I remain bowed to you,  
in this my last embrace,  
asking myself what's so dismal  
about what we damn well knew  
will be coming for all of us.

