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JOHN LOGAN

GRANDMOTHER DEAD IN THE AEROPLANE

Grandmother after that late eclipse
 when I lay drunk in the weak, April grass
 and watched the moon on the last, best Friday night
 grow awful and cruel and then lean
 slowly out of the light
 (become an odd, dark rock
 under which some of us
 still have our moving lives) —
 after that you can hold the very first
 of your favorite Easters.
 At least a good and gaudy card
 came each year before you died.
 There is no message yet this time.
 Instead I feel you addressed
 and mailed me on this Saturday plane.
 Grandmother you have verified the myth
 inside my head. . . . Inside my head
 I carry your gentle, senile hunch-
 back and your swollen ankles
 still shuffle here in the airplane's halls.
 Your rheumy, red old eyes leak out all our tears.
 Look out, Grandmother!
 Or else I will look in. The plane
 window angles near us (well, between)
 and your face
 reflects. You are spread
 thin and shiny over all this Holy Saturday.
 Grandmother is there ever any Easter
 without a hope? And will the moon
 be light
 for the Saturday dance again tonight?
 I am angry at myself since you've died.
 The 727 motor at my ear
 is joining me fast to Detroit
 on my Easter trip
 and it has quite
 disoriented my small, waning life.
 Everything has died.
 I'll learn how to mourn quite mad
 if never to rave in love.

I want to stay up here forever,
grandmother. For I am tired of the fogged earth
down there
with its esoteric itch of flesh.
"Time Flies." I swear my soul has just turned
ninety too. On the night I visited
and stayed
in your sad, old ladies' home
I really shook. Sick, I shivered
from the barbed, tiny animals of dread.
I kissed you and I cried
and tried to sleep
in the ancient woman's bed
(your absent friend)—
her family plastered to the wall.
something flickered back
and forth in me, black and white,
and I touched myself heavily
again and again
to see if the young
man (I was twenty then) was anywhere around.
Oh you and I too have had our scenes,
since I was the chosen one.
When I was ten
and you were visiting the farm
you unwrapped your long,
red, lacy velvet doll
and then undid the bones
of china for its tiny house.
You took the picture albums
out of the attic trunk. And took that
milky, moonshaped paperweight.
We squatted crosslegged on the attic planks
and swayed and wept for what
you made me think
the two of us had lost.
Was it really only you
who were not young
and who no longer had a home?
Oh, I did love you my ardent old Mom.
It was the second time for me,
my first mother gone.
You pushed me proudly in my pram

and I remember this:
I wet my pants
right in front of your friends
until I knew you noticed me.
You fixed the rockers on my broken horse.
And just before the picnic once
put a poultice on my swelling thumb
to draw the sliver out.
Now I watch the nail's moon
blacken by my pen.
Look. My plane has never gone
far: it hovers in your air.
Christ what am I doing here?
Communing with you I guess.
Well then, come on,
my beloved crone. Open up.
Now I lay me down
in your aged lap and sleep
clean through this Easter.

Easter, 1968