

Carol Leon

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My Mother's Hands

Full fleshed and kind
they wrap around my hand
clasping my fears.

Guiding me across streets,
junctions of uncertainties
and distress,
through new experiences.

Held me when I grew weary.
Stroked my head as I slept,
telling me all would be well.
Always.

They went through fire
and water.

Nourishing me with
delightful meals,
balms, ointments on
sore limbs and painful throats.

Healing fingers

telling me all is not lost.

Ringed and jeweled,

they kept pace with what she wore,

coloured stones, gleaming rings,

adding glamour to the mundane.

Wrinkled now but still fine.

A gesture, a gentle stroke,

a weak grasp,

telling me love prevails.

My Mother's hands.

Always a loving caress.

Ode to the Table in the Hall

Narrow rectangle table
standing in the hall.
We dress you in clothes of varied hues.
On your patterned surface
mugs of tea, coffee, Milo and water
jostle with medicines, balms, pens, notebooks
and the remote control.
Glasses of wine, Coke and beer
entangle with tissues
and chocolate wrappings.
On you we serve meals,
the different times of day.
Eggs, bread and biscuits.
Rice, chicken roast, devilled beef.
An orange fish curry,
aromatic and delicious.
Over you we passionately discuss
news and stories.
You listen to our grievances, woes.
Our jokes and laughter.
Our songs.
We had you for so long
table in the hall.
You have been privy to our
shared joys and sorrows.
You are a part of our family.
A sturdy structure on which we
build our daily lives.
What would we do without you?

Shamala (3 August 2020)

The hearse stands outside.

Inside she lies in a white box

in her spruce, white house.

Her bereaved sisters,

her son whose countenance I cannot

discern under his mask, stand around her.

I join the mourners,

taking in the simple beauty of her home,

her smile overshadowing the thinness

of her frame.

Poor darling girl, so much treatment inflicted

on your fragile body.

Perhaps in this house which

gleams in the moonlight and the sunlight,

you dared to smile.

I sensed your love for us but

you could not let us in.

How I wish you invited us into your world.

We could have talked, shared secrets.

Even laughed.

You, so concerned about this

world of ours,

was also so fearful of it.

Goodbye my quiet, courteous, kind neighbor.

I would like to see you again,

and maybe this time we will

share our innermost thoughts

and throw our heads back

in laughter.

Carol Leon is Associate Professor of English at Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her areas of research relate to postcolonialism and travel literature. She has publications, both journal articles and book chapters, in her areas of specialisation and has presented papers at national and international conferences. She is also the author of *Movement and Belonging: Lines, Places, and Spaces of Travel* (Peter Lang, New York).