

2000

Grandma

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Matilda Cox / Grandma

watched
the bloody liver
of a calf
quiver in her hand,

washed greens and dishes
till her palms
shriveled,

rubbed fresh butter
on grease burns,
vicks salve
on a small chest,

dug flour
from her fingernails
every night.

Her offspring gone,
she nurtured theirs,
though her fingers
cracked and bled.

We saw her smile,
never knew she dreamed
of manicures,
piano keys,
the sweet skin
of a lover's back.