

Whose Hands Are These?

A dinner plate hits the floor with a crash.

“Damn it!” he cries.

Lester stands,

Staring down at the shards;

Spaghetti sauce spatters ceramic tile,

The cabinets,

His slippers

And baggy pants legs where

Lester totters,

Shoulders hunched,

Stooped and hump-backed,

Not looking at the mess on the floor.

Looking at his hands.

Whose hands are these?

He wonders.

Gnarly-boned, mottled claws overstretched

With blue-veined skin

As thin and transparent as tissue paper?

Are these the same hands that darted and flew,

That boxed at the gym in McKinley Park?

Are these the hands that every day

Gripped a pipe wrench long as your skinny arm?

That held the handles of the fifty-caliber gun

When you shot your way through Belgium in '44?

Hands that splayed across the keys

To chord a Rhapsody in Blue

Or pound a boogie-woogie cadence just for fun?

That deftly balanced a sable brush alive with color and

Made it dance across a canvas?

That caressed a woman and made her a wife?

Cared for a family and made them a life?

These hands?

That once could fix a thing?

Or fight?

Or love?

Create?

These hands that can't even hold a plate?