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## These Hands

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# These Hands

by Joann Gardner

That's what it comes down to  
at the end of the day, at the end  
of my arms—these hands,  
this particular collection of wrinkles  
and pads, a map of my beginning  
and my end.

No matter where I take them,  
into my lap, like cones, or into my  
pockets, the burden of twin stones,  
feeling the heft there, the rounded  
granite peaks.

Not my father's giant hands  
that learned the power of gentleness,  
nor my mother's married hands,  
calm, but for the twitch and flick  
at invisible crumbs,

but the long brittle fingers  
and delicate veins of my grandmother  
who wept, not remembering, then  
remembering her loss. These hands  
haunt me, make me anxious for work,

to reach into the heart of things,  
to touch what matters, before bracing  
and then learning to let go.

