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## Taking Grandmother to the Ladies' Room

Gina Clark

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## Taking Grandmother to the Ladies' Room

*Gina Clark*

The ladies' room is paint-can pink.  
Paper peaches, magnolias with their rust  
undersides showing, penny-red ribbons  
spool around the walls. Grandma's feet  
shift over the rose-tint tiles.  
After five minutes she has not had to flush.  
She finds me by the basins, fetches  
her cane. She does not wash her hands.  
I pull the hem of her dress over her calves.  
Her tricot slip is twisted. On my knees,  
I loosen it, I touch her hips. She is tender,  
light-boned like a bird. Afterwards  
she tells me the water is on her heart  
and none of it will come—not out of her ribs,  
not out of her bladder, not from her knuckles  
cold and rippled like little ponds.  
She will drown inside out, she says.  
Grandmother holds my elbow  
when we leave the ladies' room.  
She bends her head near enough  
for me to smell her face powder,  
her peroxide, near enough for me  
to see the stream parting her eyelids.  
It is too slow and will not drain her.