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## The Family Stones

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# THE FAMILY STONES

For Fred G and Grant Watson White

## I

Hours in bed  
devising a walking machine.

One hand curled, enervate,  
like a heavy claw. Toes  
on one foot  
more twisted every day.

One good foot  
still measures time  
beneath the sheets.



## II

Already for weeks  
of unmitigated cold  
you talked of putting  
the garden in early.

We knew you'd be  
taking shelled peas  
to neighbors  
before their seeds  
had broken the crust.

Now pillows prop you.  
When the blinds are up,  
you can see a window  
overlooking a garden  
gone to seed.

III

One sunday  
your daughters  
rolled you in your chair  
under the drooping willows  
to church.

While the voices  
of some who've loved you sang  
"There is a green hill far away,"  
arthritic agony kept you alive,  
attentive.

That night  
you asked  
what "faraway" meant.  
Twice.



IV

How tidy you kept  
the family stones.  
Grass around the markers  
clipped, flowers  
in the urns.

Tonight you said you saw  
Fred and your mother  
in the garden window  
beckoning.

You wanted to go  
to the cemetery again,  
ready  
to lie down  
beside your son,  
my father.

Philip White