

Family Hands

Mary Chapin Carpenter

Last Sunday we got in the car and we drove
To the town you were raised in, your boyhood home
The trees were just turning, up on the ridge
And this was your valley when you were a kid

You showed me the railroad that your daddy worked on
As we neared the old house where your granny lives on
She's nearing ninety years now, with her daughters by her side
Who tend the places in the heart where loneliness can hide

Raised by the women who are stronger than you know
A patchwork quilt of memory only women could have sewn
The threads were stitched by family hands, protected from the moth
By your mother and her mother, the weavers of your cloth

Your grandmother owned a gun in 1932
When times were bad just everywhere, you said she used it too
And the life and times of everyone are traced inside their palms
Her skin may be so weathered, but her grip is still so strong
And I see your eyes belong to her and too your mama too
A slice of Virginia sky, the clearest shade of blue

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And a rich man you might never be, they'd love you just the same
They've handed down so much to you besides your Christian name
And the spoken word won't heal you like the laying on of hands
Belonging to the ones who raised you to a man

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