

Visit

You offered to carry my suitcase, but
The sight of your outstretched hand, knotted
And spotted with sickness and anticipation,
Made me refuse, uncomfortable, looking over
Your bent shoulder – not remembering seeing
Over it before – away from the lines and seams
Underscoring the desperate need to please that
Gleamed wetly in the rheumy corners
Of your sinking eyesockets, strange pearls.

Your head once knocked against the bottom of the sky,
And your hand once could blot out the sun,
Raised to point out the turrets and follies of your latest
Air castle or falling, cracking, like lightning,
Over my upturned cheek, red marks like burns on my face.

You stand by the aunts as we drive away,
Framed in the car's back window,
Tinted like your old school picture caged in its album.
As the aunts wave, mouths soundlessly moving,
You duck your balding head and cover your
Eyes with one crabbed hand,
With the other fitfully waving us on.

Joanna Grant