1987

A Votre Santi

Christina Spink

A Votre Santi

As I got older, so did he and I saw him less.
Only for those gatherings on designated days
Did I see him
And he kept changing.

Across the walnut dinner table
With white, fringed hair and a content smile
He always proposed his toast:
A Votre Santi.

After dinner we would all sit and chat.
I can see him fold his arms across his belly
and doze off to sleep.
Grandmother always got mad,
But I didn't care because he was
nice.

One day he talked to my ceramic cat.
He thought it was real.
Everyone laughed.
That was before we realized.

One night at dinner he told us he spoke five languages
And he saw a pile of naked bodies behind the chain fence
And he used to live in Texas, Tennessee, and Idaho
And he said, "Onetwothreefour what the hell are you for?"
And he sang, "My Irish eyes are shining"
And he said, "Ladedagoobedeegoobeededo"
And he didn't remember who I was
And he wrestled my father to the ground
And he ripped up my mother's mail
And at first, we were quite entertained.
Everyone laughed.
That was before we realized that my grandfather wasn't my
grandfather anymore.

Now he sits in a hospital
Alone, I guess-
I've never been.
But he wouldn't know me anyway.
I laughed, but not anymore because I am scared.
What is in his mind?
What has become of him?
He was a good man,
A gentle man.
A Votre Santi, Grandfather. To your health.

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