

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

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