

Raising the Dead

by [Samuel Smith](#) in the [July 2023](#) issue

is never easy, not even in a dream.
You start with an old woman,
long, grey tufts of hair shooting
out of nose and ears, skin drawn
taut against bone.

When you open
her eyes, you will know she is
your grandmother, and that indistinct
man next to her must be
your grandfather.

But when you open
his mouth, bucked white teeth have
supplanted the tobacco-browned
diminutives that once sifted
irrepressible laughter.

Soon you've softened and billowed skin,
trimmed nose and ears, fired eyes with embers
from the potbelly stove, and restored
ancient atoms, molecules, and cells.

When the time for speech
has come, you find you cannot breathe
the word—the words you wish to hear
are not your own.

To speak of sun and sand,
of black bears milling just beyond
screened doors and windows, of hornet's
nests in greying outhouses torched
with old railroad flares, of back-breaking
oar-pulling against cold Ontario
wind and rain—

This is to be
simply grateful for the life that was
and is, with no need
for any life to come.