

## 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.