

# Parcel

by Philip F. Clark

You can look all you want  
in the bag -- you won't find the past --  
as your hands, furious with searching  
parse the gems and stones, the porcelain  
of memory: that group of days you laughed,  
the few you held like rain inside, that opal  
question constantly turning over in your palm.  
The sex and sweat of younger years.

You reach and touch the sharps of recollection,  
coming away blooded or healed. Skin  
remembers its better days; the brunt of  
a kiss in the middle of an answer before  
it leaves your mouth. Scintillants, stones,  
urge your fingers forth, turning each object,  
"Is this it? Is this?" Macabre and moistened  
borrowings hunker, loom, stretch

from dates unknown; unwired clocks whose  
hands no longer tell time, but swell with gleanings,  
hear ghosts leaning in, and like the last bell of what might  
have been, you hear the knell of kindness  
long before its cathedral voices -- a recessionary --  
barter better times. You come upon it:  
the soft, off-kilter scrape of shell; its cut a common  
pain, now softened, polished, purloined.

