

My Hands
Jeff Landgraf

My hands are me.
Not my heart, not my mind,
But my hands.

If I have a soul, it lives in the space hidden within my clenched fist.
What I smell, what I taste, what I see, what I hear, what I imagine:
All illusions, everywhere.
But the hands build,
The hands touch,
The hands feel,
And the hands know,
That long after playfulness has been driven from the body by time,
When I'm too old, too sick, or too fat,
To keep up with a child's light movement,
My fingers will remain nimble enough to play games with a baby,
For my hands are me, so long as life remains.

The hands are the lovers.
Whatever games the eyes play,
Pretending to reveal what's hidden under their lashes,
And whatever words escape through seductive lips,
Crafted to lure by the guile of the tongue,
In the end, the hands decide if its love,
For it's the hands that touch.

The hands carry the calluses and the scars and the wounds,
Earned from action.
The pot boiling on the stove that falls,
Or a world crashing down,
The hands reach out to catch before there is time to think,
Unafraid of the scalding heat,
Or being crushed by some unyielding weight,
Heedless of danger,
For the hands are the warriors,
And the kings.

The hands act without calculation,
Whether clenched to defend life,
Or open to accept it.
So unlike my heart, or my mind,
My hands deserve the right to carry my soul.
They have earned the right to be me.