**Without Hands** by Lorna Crozier

All the machines in the world stop. The textile machines, the paper machines, the machines in the mines turning stones to fire. Without hands to touch them, spoons, forks and knives forget their names and uses, the baby is not bathed, bread rises on the stove, overflows the bowl. Without hands, the looms stop, the music stops. The plums turn sweet and sticky and gather flies.

Without hands without those beautiful conjunctions those translators of skin, bone, hair two eyes go blind two pale hounds sniffing ahead and doubling back to tell us of hot and cold or the silk of roses after rain are lost two terns feeling the air in every feather are shot down.

Without hands my father doesn't plant potatoes row on row, build a house for wrens, or carry me from the car to bed when I pretend I'm sleeping. On wash days my mother doesn't hang clothes on the line, she doesn't turn the pages of a book and read out loud, or teach me how to lace my shoes.

Without hands my small grandmother doesn't pluck the chicken for our Sunday meal or every evening, before she goes to sleep, brush and brush her long white hair.