Today, Sheila Gray Jordan of Chebeague Island uses the two most common seasonings of the dinner table to create a family portrait.

Salt and Pepper

*by Sheila Gray Jordan*

After grace, his next words would be, “Pass the salt and pepper,”
never the one without the other,
though a guest at his table,
a stranger to this courtesy, might ask for salt or pepper.
And we would pass them both.
The Morton Salt walked its girl with her umbrella through the rain in the kitchen,
under her arm a box pouring salt: when it rains it pours—a negligence or lesson, I could not be sure.
Mother measured a pinch in the palm of her hand.
Still he lifted the wide-holed shaker, salting the salty dinner, not adding pepper. “Unhealthy,” she warned.
At the funeral, she places a rose.
We cup our handfuls of dirt.
It falls on his coffin like too much pepper.