

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,  
Maine Poet Laureate*

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.

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