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Out of My Hands

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It happened one night, not like
in the movie. In a rage, looking
for the empty bottles, I gripped
the 40-lb trash bag carelessly
with three fingers, right and left,
the middle, the anular, the pinkie,
three times two, six frail failing
fingers, incompetently digital,
ripping the bag up and away from
its fate, the green bin on wheels.

Six months later, my hands won't
make a fist. They cramp like crabs.
At night they fall asleep, keeping
me awake. I shake them like maracas.
They return to me. I still can't sleep.
Neuropathy, I'm told. So now
I let them sleep-walk all over my
love's body. The bottles were hers.

[Gustavo Pérez Firmat's](#) imaginative writing has been published in *The Paris Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Southern Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and other journals. His most recent book is *My Favorite Monster* (2024), a volume of translations from the Spanish. He is the David Feinson Professor Emeritus of Humanities at Columbia University.