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all my memories gather 'round her

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all my memories gather 'round her

Aubrey Cumberledge

my great-grandmother's face
has flashed repeatedly in my mind
over the last nine months

I was only eight when she passed
so I don't remember her well
 just a few moments
 here and there

her eyes fixed
on my great-grandfather's pocket watch
swinging
 back and forth
as I tried to hypnotize her
when I was in my magic phase

laying in bed one night
when I couldn't go to sleep
watching a documentary
about mother giraffes

her curly red hair
she always hated

and it's funny
 I dyed mine
 that exact shade
and wondered
 if I looked like her

the way she smelled
the way she laughed
 but for the life of me
I can't remember her voice

blended memories and stories
so muddled behind the lens
of a child's mind

I don't know if I remember her at all

or have just heard these tales
too many times

but I can see my pink DS
my cousin and I played with
in my great-grandmother's kitchen
one winter night
as family gathered in the other room

I remember that pink DS
I remember the way the air felt
 heavy
 and sad

I don't remember if I ever told her goodbye

I do remember my mother's tears
 the crack in her voice
as she said her last goodbyes
to the woman who raised her
while I could only think
 how different she looked

 but years of cancer
 and a small town mortician
 will do that I guess

she waits for me
at the end of my memory lane

waits as I gather the courage
to speak the thought I've had
 all these months

the thought hard to ignore when
 like Charlie Brown's ornaments
diagnoses hang heavy
on the branches of my family tree

the thought that consumes my mind
 yet I can't yet say aloud
because this lump in my throat
is g r o w i n g
 as fast as the one in my breast

and I just want to see her again

to hold me like she did when I was young
and for her to tell me
everything will be

okay