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Visiting Grandparents

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Visiting Grandparents

Farmland cleared for development, a dogwood
stripped clean of its autumn fruit by squawking,

ravenous Grackles—Desolation—Disillusionment:
the state of my heart as I enter the door.

Greeted by familiar smells, a handshake
and a kiss as always. I reciprocate

and smile, stomaching the sting of falsehood.
His gaze lingers long like snowdrifts do

in springtime, wisdom perceiving discrepancies
between eyes and lips; thought and speech. We sit and chat:

my daughter dances. Countless porcelain knick-knacks
tremble in fear. I flinch, though nothing is broken.

He straightens in his seat, "I'd like to show you
my mushrooms—never seen anything like them."

The backyard freshly mown, save for a swath
beneath the Poplar where mushrooms gather,

spared the sun by the shade of the tree, and the blade
by the impulse and wonder of an aged man.

Viewed from above, a heaping platter of pancakes;
from below, a miniature ivory forest. He grins

then turns and walks to the Persimmon, picks one
and places it in my hand, "You'll like it—it's sweet."

I sink my teeth in and wince, discovering
there the butt of his joke. Moisture is sucked

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from my mouth, lips pucker like prunes.
He laughs and squeezes my shoulder,

“They’re no good ‘till after a frost,
come back and try one then!” I spit

and despite the foul taste and contortions,
a light returns...a blade of grass...a smile.

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