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By Dom Fonce

MY MOTHER'S HAIR

I have inherited the past turned crystal  
and cold. It disarranges in shapes that shuffle from  
my thumbnail, thick with excess. I see faces  
that have never mouthed my name but smile  
at me—shine at the world forever like they're  
wax dolls. I see my mother there, shocked awake  
by flash-flicker, cemented into silence, forgotten  
on film. Here, she's staked into timelines that  
she's veered away from and left behind,  
gifted to a different woman with  
different hair that hangs from her like a babushka ghosting  
through the air. Now she dyes  
away the silver like crying does to bad memories—a stream  
veined through soil,  
tarnished by the dusty grains. My hair is like hers, long  
and unreasonable for a man—you will never catch me  
in front of a camera. Afraid to  
see myself years later—my head tackled  
and grated down to fuzz—and my lost expression, my  
grasping for identity through the pores of my scalp. Each string that  
sheds  
to the ground I gather and rope into one  
and throw out to the past, to you, woman that's not  
my mother, that didn't understand  
she would birth me, that never knew she could hurt the ones she  
loved

in one gulp.

Let me hoist you into  
the present and tell you of the future, your fortune,  
the hair you wear now, and all the things you  
wish you wouldn't do but will, because each haircut is a symbol  
of a cut stabbed deep but

survived—

and, for you, there's a lot of life to live, and a lot of  
flesh  
to prick, and an infinite catalog of styles to  
choose from.