Half-Truths

Summer Perkins

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At the burial of my grandfather
the air cut the crowd like
a thick layer of ice.

As I stood on the soft clay dirt
my heel-tipped shoes
sunk toward the corpse beneath me.

Another body
I didn’t know
hugged
me and I struggled to hide
the automatic tears
that wished to escape.

I held my breath
as my brother
rested his head on the gold-tinted,
metal casket lid
to weep.
There were no words
to speak.

I walked with awkward grace and placed
my hand on his shoulder.
I pulled him back.
I wanted to say
something inspirational. Instead,
I said nothing
and held
him beneath the cloudy sky.

Before long, the dirt
filled the grave;

there were no last words before

he was no more.
The Door

I visit my grandmother in her home broken by death.

She can’t remember my name.

She asks when he will walk through that door again. I tell her, “Any moment now.” She smiles I’m all about half-truths.

I take her wasted hand in mine. I focus on her beating pulse.
Her hands used to
be warm, she says.

She acts like
a child
lost
She wants to listen to the music
on the screen.
As it flickers
light I catch her staring
at the door expecting him
any moment now.