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Grandpa's Collections

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Grandpa's Collections

He keeps things like soldiers must -
Prexies and Liberty issues, his beard hair trimmings
like pacifists in black bags.

He keeps his eyes on
the Wheel of Fortune, a silver coin Judas held
resting in his shoe.

He keeps his life in a locked room upstairs.
The only complete collection of Corn Palace postcards -
Absurdities in Kodachrome. Antique

telephone pole insulators -
set them by the window light, they kaleidoscope.
He shows me his retirement watch, it's still.

He keeps paperweights with flowers,
family histories, a spineless first edition Mein Kempf. Blow
the dust off, it's gunsmoke. He showed me

a skull ring with "West Wall" engraved
on it, a thin silver with all the nicks of a wedding band.
He did not buy it. It was not a gift.

Grandpa shows guns best.
He had drawers full of them smuggled into his room
right under grandma's nose.

When I was a boy,
he let me hold all of them,
all his heavy words creaking the hardwood floors.

He passed down to me a gift
more valuable than coins or a ring - that feeling of cold weight
and purpose accumulating in my small, scared hands.

