

THE SHORT GOODBYE

Back in the Adirondacks, near the soft sand of Lake Lucerne, where sunfish glittered like giant dimes, in the last days of summer, at dusk, I walked alone in a grove of pines. I had set off in search of some feeling I couldn't quite identify, a more exalted sense of what it meant to be alive, and received instead, in the stifling August air, a revelation of death. There were no fat clouds, no angels with toothpaste smiles. The dead slipped under and were gone.

This was the summer of my eighth year, spent in a cabin with my grandparents, both of whom I loved more than I would allow. My grandma and her raspy laugh, her green crochet needles knit together under the lamp, like tiny axes whet and whet. My grandpa leaning over the checkerboard with his beautiful crooked teeth. They were burdened people contented by simple pleasures. I should have kissed each of them more than I did. We waste so much of our hearts. Only the dying keep a full account. In their moment of passing, the exact amount is revealed on our tongues, which turn black with regret.

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