

## On Grandmother's Couch

The only doctor in Franklin, Idaho,  
was drunk that night, so a midwife  
caught my grandmother before she fell  
onto the rough kitchen table.

Eighty-six years later, we sit  
on her plastic-covered couch,  
her scarecrow body slumping  
into mine, hands like orange peel,  
curled across my forearm, grabbing  
at almost anything today.

Because I have hair, she calls me  
Nathan—her teenage gardener who says  
he feels guilty each time my mother pays him.  
All bald men are Arnold—her husband  
twenty-eight years dead.

Our silent hour is punctuated  
only by her struggle  
to breathe through thick phlegm  
that refuses to rise. I sit, cradling her frame,  
and count the tiptoe rhythm of her heart,  
every measure decrescendo.

—Quinn Warnick