When The Names Still Fit The Faces

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WHEN THE NAMES STILL FIT THE FACES

On a shelf in the back of the big closet after her death we found stacks and stacks of photo albums full of her subjects. How many did she fool with her stammering just-a-seconds, her fiddling, this darn thing, her eye stalling for the perfect cinematic moment, that infinity of seconds when genuine smiles stretch thin and elastic, loose arms thrown casually over shoulders grow heavy and unnatural. The early photos feature new cars and old farmhouses, plain women in fancy dresses and men in uniform. The later photos are thick with nyloned thighs, Christmas trees dripping with ornaments, uncles long dead and children long grown old. Surely, this is the trail she would have us follow, back to the people we would never know, the selves we would never remember, back to the time when the names still fit the faces. In the end fearing loss of memory she took to labeling every photo, putting the name, finally, to the image, sprawling Ed across Ed’s blank forehead,
tracing Reinhold on a high, thin, cheekbone, spiraling Emma up Emma’s bleach-blonde beehive. She, the hand behind the shutter is seldom pictured. Only in rare moments when someone has seized the camera and forced her finally into the frame does she appear, grinning, big-boned, and out of context, with a large Me emblazoned across her ample bosom.

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