

## My Cousin's Wife Brings My Aunt Home, Unexpectedly

She asks what I was doing  
in Texas, wondering if I were like my aunt  
who claimed her life was a country and western  
song, that she left "all of her exes in Texas,"  
though my aunt had no exes there, that I knew of,  
her only boyfriend following her husband's death,  
a wild French-Canadian I can barely remember,  
beyond the photo of him with a shot gun and a moose's head  
that kept her end table company, even years after  
he no longer did the same favor for her.

She delivers a lament like no one  
I know, choosing exactly the sort of memory  
to embrace loss, reminding me how even in her seventies,  
my mother's sister made the kids laugh, teaching them  
how to do the Twist, and man, she could Twist the night away  
maybe having learned to do it with her crazy French-Canadian  
whose ears stuck out like open car doors--my aunt was  
a serious twister in her day and even beyond.

She only has half the story, as is often  
the case, when you marry into a family, not knowing,  
for example, how my aunt politely explained  
to a disabled reservation man that it was  
not a good thing to look in the bedroom windows of widowed  
women, then as he left her thermo-pane  
for the last time, how she grabbed  
the neighborhood tomcat by the tail, the one  
that always tried to break into her  
house whenever she opened the door  
and flung it yards away, instructing it  
to "Never come back, fucker," laughing  
to herself, despite her better judgment,  
as the man jumped  
a little, reaching the road.

She had never seen  
the photograph we lost in the fire of my aunt,  
taken sometime in the '50s, wearing a long,  
tight-fitting dress patterned in black and white  
horizontal stripes, an outfit we called  
her "hamburglar dress," after that McDonald's  
commercial character, because we refused to see  
her that far back in the past, a beautiful reservation  
woman in a provocative outfit, ready  
to twist at a moment's notice, should the right man  
come along, knowing as we would  
know into the future, that she would  
love twice, maybe even three times, but that she would  
be alone at the end.

She receives no answer  
from me, as her question merely opens doors for us  
to remember the ways my aunt was  
more exotic and alive than the Twist,  
and certainly more dangerous than a country  
and western song, and there, for that moment, we have  
brought her back, each in our own ways.

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