

picture in the room is above the bed, a framed picture of kids sledding down the hill. I think it came like that from the store but I stare anyways to see if there's someone I know. I look for me but see only strangers smiling in the snow. I'm feeling crazy but I need to find something. I check the bedside table and it's empty. I rip back the quilt, desperate to find her old red satin sheets, but there's just the white scratchy polyester kind.

Where's your stuff Grandma, I want to yell and then I see them. Her dentures. Sitting in a glass next to the sink are her old teeth. She used to let me watch her take them out at the end of the day.

I glance at the door. My mom will be back any second. Then I look over at my grandma but her eyes are turned towards the wall. The thing is, I know if I asked her, she'd give them to me. I know she would. I reach into the glass, my hands gripping the teeth and plastic, and scoop them up. They're not squishy like I expected. I tuck them in my sweatshirt pocket and run back to the chair beside my grandma. Her lips have turned up. I could swear she was smiling. She won't tell my mom, even if she could.

My mom sweeps back into the room carrying two bags. "I'm back. Sorry about that," she says as she pushes the door open and wedges the doorstep underneath. "Let's let in some fresh air. I think it's going to rain. Have you two been visiting? I used to call Margaret your shadow when she was younger because she never left your side. Right, Mom? You remember Margaret. Of course you do. Margaret come closer to grandma."

The teeth have soaked my pocket.

"Margaret, bring the chair closer."

Holding onto the dentures in one hand, keeping them safe in my pocket, I drag my chair so it butts up against my grandma's. I can't seem to let go of the dentures. Now that the door's open we can hear the guy down the hall moaning again. My mom unwraps the new sheets, flapping them in the air.

I look over at my grandma but her eyes are glazed. She's rubbing the sleeve of my coat between her fingers. I take my free hand and rest it over hers. They look the same but hers feel soft and moist. I rub my thumb along her bones, over her wrist and down her fingers, back and forth. She used to tell me she was big boned but she was wrong. She was always small and breakable underneath.

*Marcia Walker is a former lawyer whose stories have been published in The Globe and Mail, and featured on CBC radio programs DNTO and The Wild Side. She lives in Toronto with her husband and two children.*

## RENEE NORMAN

### These Women

I am making a list  
women in middle age  
who rose  
no floated  
to that cliché ceiling  
& seeing their image there  
the double chin  
lines around the neck  
skin tags the first signs  
of flabby arms & wiry  
stray black hair  
in their chin  
like some old crone

were grateful  
for the occasional blur  
of progressive lenses  
determined, strong  
mindful of lost time  
goals to achieve  
took their place there  
with the fierceness  
only years of invisibility  
grow

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