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All the Men in My Family Die First

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J. Bruce Fuller

All the Men in My Family Die First

Too much sugar in my coffee
and the half-pack of cigarettes
on the table gives less comfort these days.
Some mornings I smell the pipe
my grandfather smoked, burnt cherries,
though I can't remember his voice.
They tell me he did not speak much
after the war. My grandmother lived
twenty-five years without him.
She buried three of her four sons.
After each one smoked himself to death,
I'd sit up and visit for a while,
biscuits from scratch, and coffee,
her daily clockwork, though her laugh
lessened with each sweetened cup
until in her long silences I rose to go.