

DIAMOND FORDE

The Last Time I Saw My Grandfather

he told me he was glad I wasn't fat yet
but this time, with flesh glutinous on my arms and back,
hips spread like grain, I wax at his bedside and watch
his violeting cheeks, their bruised orchids flutter
with every labored breath and I allow myself
to imagine what he must see: five years and my body
pours like golden-throated honey. We are breathless.
He is losing grip of the oxygen threading
his lungs. I fear I'm really here. He rattles,
and I lean in for his last sound—a grunt, a groan, then
gospel before the words brittle and break
to whispers. He tells me he's proud of the family
he's led. I want to remind him what's left to do:
to fly with a fistful of heat, to walk on stilts,
or tell me, even once, he loves me, but I can't
hear him anymore. Only the metrical hum
of poetic lines. Ai, who said once that grief was sweet,
so sweet *you can never get enough* of it,
and I want to ask about *guilt*. It bubbles
fountainous and sweet like chocolate in my throat.
My grandfather traces his eyes on a fat glance
of me. I burble with luxurious sweetness,
thick and gratuitous guilt. I am guilty
because I am grateful for this last, fateful chance
to disappoint him—he, who once grazed his cold hand
across my rounding cheek and prayed for bones.