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Recompense

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Recompense

by Megan Van Horn

i.

We step over the backs of
Germans and Italians ringed
in circles around granite obelisks
on our journey to the olive
grove. My grandmother gave me
her floral-patterned umbrella
to shield my forehead from
more freckles, and my other hand
carries a plastic bag, three
oranges, and a trowel.

ii.

My grandmother's fingers loop
around the crook of my elbow as
we bear down on the olive grove
and the backs of our companions,
off in the distance and smudged
against the glare of afternoon sun.

iii.

My brother skips ahead next
to my uncle, impatiens in his
arms, and my mother carries
a lighter and a coffee can, my
father the jug of water and
bottle of rice wine.

iv.

We ring ourselves two
rows deep around my
grandfather and light
bonfires in the olive grove
to keep him warm. The

water is for the impatiens and
extinguishing the flames
and the wine for the oranges
sliced open with a pocketknife
and the cold chicken that my
uncle brought. And now as
we cross back over the
Serbians in the ground,
our silhouettes against the sunset
scorch seven red thumbprints
in the sky, just one shy
of happiness.