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Some Kind of Special

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SOME KIND OF SPECIAL

From my grandpa, I inherited an even demeanor and good luck. With nothing but a middle school diploma from 1937, he co-founded a pipeline company and bought an estate on a ten-acre apple orchard, and when he wasn't gardening or golfing or tending to his Arabians, he was winning \$10,000 jackpots at the casino. The other gamblers, usually trailer folks from my neighborhood, spilled entire paychecks into the machines and only made it home if they had enough gas in their pickups.

My twenty-five Bellott cousins lived in real houses with foundations, took gymnastics and dance, enjoyed vacations at the beach. My uncles worked in offices with nameplates on the doors while my aunts stayed home and made *éclairs*. I was the Bellott who lived in a singlewide with no father and a Jehovah's Witness mother who didn't take me anywhere except the Kingdom Hall. For fun, I foraged in the fridge and baked.

At family reunions, my grandpa sat in his designated chair, smiling and sipping scotch and water. The children ran circles around him, and eventually one would end up in his lap, asleep. My grandma, meanwhile, maintained conversation and good spirits, organized Scrabble and Boggle competitions, replenished veggie and cookie trays, perpetually wiped up spills—Grandpa's and ours. He rarely noticed her there, scrubbing the floor at his feet.

He racked up DWI's that never landed him in jail, collected girlfriends my grandma wouldn't leave him over. He didn't talk much and most people thought he was wise, but my mother said that, in truth, he was foolish-- he'd been in the right place at the right time and that was the only reason he wasn't a bum. Well, that and his smile. I said, "So luck is the only difference between

him and us?" and she said we had brains, and that according to my latest report card, it was high time I used mine. She still lives in that trailer, still checks groceries at Safeway.

I grew up and made my own way in the world—a dandelion among rosy girls who'd come of age in regular houses. Yellow was in that year, and I snagged the best boy. I shared an opinion at the right party, skipped college and got a job writing for the Food Network. I take plenty of time off now and it's not called vacation. Handsome waiters serve me free dinners in nice restaurants, and I sip expensive drinks and give them the eye. I don't have wrinkles because I don't work hard, and people assume that because I'm young and landed this job, I'm some kind of special. I drive home, full and buzzed, and my husband vacuums the living room while I sit on the couch and open the mail. A check, a travel digest, a birthday card from Grandma. The winnings from a sweepstakes contest spill into my lap.