

My glasses smudge when I smile. Uprturned lips in turn push up my cheeks to sloppily kiss my lenses. A permanent oil stain is smudged along the bottom on a good day. My cheeks, my Geary cheeks imported from Ireland, squish my eyes together when I laugh. Tight, red skin pulled over extra-large marshmallows, small golf balls, intrusive protrusions that pull my face even wider. I lift up my lips, feel my cheek in my fingertips, squeeze to feel its shape and wish I could tug it out, as if it were a golf ball that was placed in my face by accident. They are a gift from my mother, and I rarely appreciate gifts from my mother.

My mother's glasses don't smudge as much as mine, but where I am tight, she is soft. Soft like wet bread, her cheeks squish to the touch. They have loosened through the years, sinking further as I grew older, almost as if the stress of motherhood insists on being seen. She stands in the mirror and pulls her fleshy neck back. She holds it tight, like mine. She looks at me in the mirror and says that she was never as cute as me. I look at her and think that maybe I do like this gift she gave me. She looks back at herself and thinks about her own mother.

My grandma uses her cheeks to pray and to swear. Her cheekbones rest lower on her face, closer to the ground. They are always dusted a faint, artificial pink, a color that I think she created herself. Her laugh is in her cheeks, a sharp, taunting guffaw that does not invite you to join but demands it. Her cheeks extend past her jaw that is

always moving, always swinging her pale skin back and forth until she falls asleep. When I help put in her earrings from her husband, I brush against her skin and don't think I've ever felt anything so thin.

My grandpa's cheeks looked just like his belly: round and bouncy and always growing. His cheeks told the truth, even if they didn't say it. I could see his meaning in the quirk of his lip, the curve of his cheek, the quake of his jowl. He would sit at the head of the table, telling us stories from the day, snickering at his own slick quips. His stress was etched in his cheeks, too. His lenses were smudged by his cheeks, too. My mother can see her dad in her own blunt bones. I hope they can see grandpa's honesty in me.

My dad's cheeks are spotted red and stretched over kind words. His cheeks are bright and lined with laughter, laughter that travels as far as Paris. They are oval and can hold secrets, turn them around in his mouth until he swallows them. His cheeks have lines, but they are also defined, tight when they must be and soft when they want to be. As a little girl, when he wouldn't shave on the weekends, I pet his face, from his apple to his jaw, whispering "good kitty" and he let me. Sometimes I would hit his face and yell "bad kitty!", a joke from my fingers, and he would grab me and kiss my cheeks until I screamed.

I can't quite recall what my brother's cheeks look like, but I think they must be red like mine.