Reflection

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please go to bed
Madeline C. Domingo

he’s doing it again
the mindless tone of the television is drowned out
by the long, loud gasps
of my father as he sleeps in his chair
his belly rises and falls as he struggles to breathe
the air seems to catch and halt in his great big lungs
he stops, mouth agape, the world is still
we all hold our breath with worry as the pause lengthens
before he exhales and so do we
as he returns to his snoring
it is the same sleepy roar i would hear as a child
and imagine a great and mysterious beast in my parents’ bedroom
this was before i could see the cracked calluses on his hands
the blisters and scabs on his ankles
the slivers of silver that sprouted up in his dark hair
the way he slumps in his chair like his bones are made of lead
or maybe it’s the weight of our worlds weighing on his shoulders
every night he battles his own exhaustion
and every night he loses; his body cannot sustain his spirit
so he lays upon his comfy leather throne
our trusty canine slumbering below him in an act of loyalty
basking in the glow of some late night show