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TO MY MOTHER, AFTER THE STROKE
Julia Moore

Your granddaughter drew a picture of the clot that traveled from thigh to brain.
She made your blood the Mighty Mississippi, the freezing pipeline that softened into trudging muddy waters in a place unthinkably far away.

And, pushing up river, the clot was a barge that grew wider and wider and heavier and warmer until it got stuck in the sludge of the river silt.
Even if beautiful, your walk is stooped.  
A dropped necklace, your left side sags.  
The clatter of candy against teeth, your right side a smile.

Do you sense the quiver of your hanging arm,  
shoulders lopsided like a falling wave?

We are alone, I ask if you recall  
the morning drives to town  
when, squinting into the sun,  
you held my squirming hand.

Being alone doesn’t help,  
you still don’t answer.  
Your lips only stretch and flatten  
like a baby gurgling bath water.

Out on car rides, we watch things pass.  
Flaking barns, a clumsy church, trout ponds,  
the drooping sun, heavy as a garnet,  
a dog lolling in a dried up creek bed.
I tuck my hand into your curled fingers and stretch my eyes wide to see at dusk. You are slumped against the door.