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Sleeping after Ten Hours at the Fabric Store

Deja Earley

I dream the screaming ladies follow me home,
pushing their carts still packed with Christmas-in-July bargains.
They line up at the foot of my bed,
demanding two yards, sixty-three yards, forty-two centimeters,
an acre of slipping satin, and sixteen inches of leopard print fleece.

I plead my shift is over.
I can't cut fabric in my sleep.
But grandmas keep shoving 40% off coupons under my pillow,
furious I am out of Santa-suit velvet.

Shift to the kitchen table,
and they are all my grandmother,
crunching saltines and drinking milk to unwind.
We snap jokes and giggle over zipper lengths
before I tuck them into their carts,
curled under scratchy batting,
bolts of flannel for pillows.

I tell them I finally forgive them
for being too sick to see my debut
in *Hansel and Gretel* when I was 10.
I tell them we're moving the patterns
to be close to the notions.
I tell them I will cut again tomorrow.

Then I glide them home through rainy streets
and park them on their doorsteps,
murmuring for drinks of water
and new thimbles.