REFLECTIONS

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Birthday Party in Assisted Living

Eighty-eight, I tell Mother, *you're heroic!*
~*A relic?* she thinks she hears. ~*No, heroic!*
~ *Well, I guess I can be both.* I remind her
how, on any dance floor, she would break
into the Charleston. She wanted her hip
replacement to heal fast so she could dance again.
She holds up her stuffed pet owl, makes him
boogie in the air. Maybe she remembers how
she outshone everyone in every ballroom,
maybe she never knew.

She reaches for a framed photo from the forties,
a wedding party, bride and groom in their going-
away outfits, rose petals flying. ~*Who are these people?*
I wonder and she points at the girl who'll stop your eye—
her long full-skirted bridesmaid's gown, her classic
profile— the girl laughing with abandon. ~*That's me*
Mother says, *that was me.*