

# OMA

## TY STUMPF

In her last hours, Oma reverted to German.  
Her fierce consonants clattered. Her bones  
ground against each other.  
The shine of her Aryan blue eyes  
eroded gray.

She met her first Jew at 85, standing  
outside a high school play. As Oma reached  
to shake hands with Mrs. Rothstein, I whispered,  
“She’s Jewish.”  
Oma blinked, her limp hand fading.  
As we drove back to her apartment,  
she stared at her dirtied hand. Surprised  
the Jew didn’t have a hook nose and seemed so  
*schön*.

When her mother died forty years earlier,  
Oma sent her into the next world  
whispering, “*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer.*”  
Her mother’s heart quickened and quieted.

Oma married an American GI,  
an Okie who took orders well, whose rations  
tasted like something more than Munich’s ashes.

She kept German men on the side,  
and he tasted Asian girls in two more wars.  
They came back to the same apartment,  
Oma reading banned papers where broken  
crosses danced. He browsed *The Farmer's Almanac*,  
imagining what grows  
when the land isn't all dust.

Her father was a pharmacist  
who flew a Nazi flag.  
He hung pictures of Oma smiling  
between soldiers perched on anti-aircraft guns.  
They stare at her chest while she flirts with the camera.  
She would hand them other pictures her father took  
of her posing in swimsuits. Stiff boys  
ready to goose-step with her in their pockets.

And there she is, at two years old  
on our wall in black and white.  
A hairbow as big as her head.  
Ninety years ago, she held tightly to a chair,  
steadying her wobbly legs.  
The flashbulb exploded once,  
the *Vaterland* bright as her cotton hair.