

The Red Bridge by Carolina Williams

When anyone looks at a family photo of myself, my sister, my mother, and my father, there is one aspect of the picture that is striking — my bright, fiery red hair. It's startling because it stands out against the more subdued background of my mother's blonde locks, my father's dark brown hair, and my sister's dirty-blond tresses that are a perfect combination of the two. Against this background, my hair is eye-catching because it is orange, but the color itself is not what grabs one's attention. It is the fact that my hair is so dissimilar to everyone else's. After 18 years, I am completely used to this. Jokes that I have to be adopted and laughs that I look like someone from another family are completely commonplace to me at this point. Yet while these jokes and assertions might rattle some people and make them feel out of place in their family, I have never been truly affected because I have physical and tangible proof that I do belong: both of my grandmothers. My mother's mother and my father's mother both have bright red hair just like mine. As a child, whenever I would hear anyone ask one of my parents where my red hair came from, I would hear them respond in the same way every time: "Oh, it skipped a generation." And since I was a kid, I have loved my red hair for this very reason. It's like an inside joke between me and my grandmothers — a secret that only we share. My red hair is the bridge that covers the gap between our generations, and it is the ribbon that connects me to my family. It is a mirror in which other family members see my grandmothers reflected, and it is a reminder for my grandmothers that I am a part of them, and they are a part of me.