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I Will Tell You What My Cousin Died Of

COVID with no known comorbidities my cousin died
of the water at Camp Lejeune and the government won't pay out
she died in Texas and not in goddamn Jacksonville
she died before I met her she died and all I know about her
is she lost her hair and wore a rag on her head she was twenty
in that picture she looks eighty she looks nice and I cry
she died and I ain't ever met her but my other cousin died
Dad said he was full of cancer he died in Charleston West by God
he drank DuPont Teflon from the tap sixty fucking years
his name was Jackie we used to play Stephen Stills on the guitar
he won a class action he was a real West Virginian he was
my cousin died of stomach ulcers everyone has them
from Stonewall Jackson High they joke at the reunions
they show off their colostomies they still smoke toward the end
she could only hold down buttermilk she and this other cousin
died the same year the one from the black lung and here we were
we didn't think you could even still die from the black lung still
he suffocated in his bed like he drowned on his own ghost
my cousin who was there said I'm not sure where he was living
when he died this other cousin died of oxycodone she weren't
even a West Virginian she died somehow I'm not sure the story
it was a car wreck I know in Shreveport but this other cousin
I will tell you what my cousin is dying of she started on oxy
that was twenty or more years back her back doctor had a brochure
Purdue kicked back to him that's where her husband still goes back
for her dose and they're all up there back up where they live
too Baptist even to admit what she's dying of even and her sister
my cousin lives back in New Orleans she can't even get him
to tell her how bad it is she's been dying back since four years back
she has blood transfusions she has her spleen drained once a week

she has ammonia in her brain she just mumbles Spanish now
she knows no one now she's a dazed out vegetable she is in pain

I will tell you my cousin is dying