The Last Paper Crane

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Remembering my Granddad, Walter Gage –
Lincoln Green, Tower Gardens, The County Hotel,
Madame Cholet with a penny in her pocket, Jack the musical clown,
Sitting on your lap,
A smile in a photograph.

We are
all
stories.

Me,
my mother,
Grandmother.
My friends.

Even you,
Grandfather Ichiro.

Especially
you.

I used to think our stories,
like our lives,
are linear.
But I was wrong.

They are circles
among circles.
Overlapping, linking
together.

They ripple
across life.
But too often they fade
from memory.

Your story, Grandfather,
would have been forgotten.
Lost.

But we saved it,
you and I,
to ripple
across time
forever.

PART ONE

Japan, 2018

My fingers glance over bent spines.

Blurred words.

Yellowing pages.

'Which one?' I ask.

'You choose, Mizuki,' Grandfather mutters.

I hear his grumpiness

I look up.

Rows of books across

rows of shelves.

Bowing from their weight

into smiles.

'There is magic in books,' I breathe.

'You told me that,' I whisper.

He scoffs from his bed behind me.

'Silliness for children.'

I sigh.

I miss what he was

before Grandmother died.

His lightness.

His smile.

His sense of wonder.

'But . . . stories –' I begin.

'Are only words,' he says, 'nothing more.'

I turn, shocked.

'Leave me alone.' His voice cracks.

'But –'

'Leave!' he shouts.

I grab a book from the shelf

and I slam

the door

behind me.



Our memories weigh
Heavy on our soul, like leaves
On a dying tree