

Unto the Third Generation

I first notice the resemblance
while browsing through
old war photos: my father
in fatigues leaning against
the buttress of a bridge
or taking a bath
in an old tin tub
in the North African desert.
The same dirty blond hair,
moody green eyes. He holds
a cigarette at the same angle
when flicking the ash, breathes
the same ragged breath
when inhaling. My son
is my father all over again.

My son's stepdaughter
has thick auburn hair
that curls past the middle
of her back, long eyelashes
and sad brown eyes. A smile
to die for, complete with
dimple. She is affectionate,
needy, crawls onto laps a lot.
He has known her since
she was two and a half.
Peeling potatoes at their
kitchen table while they
horseplay in the next room,
I find myself listening . . .
listening . . .

PAT JASPER