

My Grandfather Lectures Me in Cars, over Donuts and on Playgrounds

“Have I ever given you one of my world-famous lectures?”
my Grandpa asks me as we speed down the highway
Vineyards fly by on my right,
each row, each vine blurring together
in one long burst of green
I shake my head
and he chuckles,
a laugh that seems to echo throughout the car

And so he begins

“Success is a result of hard work, timing and a little luck”
he tells me a week later
the second of many lectures
as we wait in line for our pastries

“If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s probably a duck”
That one makes me laugh
sitting across from him at Buttercream Bakery
just like every other Sunday
as I bite into a rainbow-sprinkled donut
and his usual is on the pink paper plate,
glazed, microwaved, drowned in butter

“Remember that people change”
I can barely hear him over the rush of wind
The ground rushes up at me and I clutch the chains tighter,
my knuckles white,
adrenaline rushing through my veins
We stay at that park,
me on that swing
until his lecture is over,
and even hours after

It soon becomes a ritual
Wisdom, experience, advice
imparted through conversations
in the car, over donuts, at the playground

Again
Be humble
And again

Be specific
And again
Be gentle

Yes, Papa
Yes, Papa
Yes, Papa

And then finally
when he thinks I've had enough
or learned enough
or understood enough,
he smiles,
and I see it in his eyes
The same eyes I see every morning in the mirror
except his are brimming with the wisdom of many years
and he takes my hand

"End of lecture."