

Barry Dempster

Resemblances

Too close to be recognized,
Too deep to grasp,
Too easy to believe.
- Gampopa

Lots of evidence: long hands and short fingers,
flesh as pale as cream poured straight from the fridge,

a shyness that doubles as charm: the genetic
equivalent of rhymes. And how about

Sundee, Mondee, Tuesdee, etc., born
to habit, tongues punched into patterns like those

old computer cards. Uncle Russell's smile
stuffed in with the dress-up clothes, all the cousins

taking turns in the mirror. The struck matches of
Aunt Lillian's eyes passed around on a windy

night. No wonder we love each other, cunning
narcissists. Sometimes we go too far, claiming

Claudius or Cleopatra, former
versions of ourselves. Look, this gold wafer

of an earlobe, this star-shaped mole on my hip,
proof that I'm never completely alone.

Not to mention my imaginary friend
who in the same blue shirt is a dead ringer.

Who's next, the neighbours, features morphing through
peepholes in the fence? The mailman evolving

with constant devotion? And what about that
otherwise stranger in *Starbucks*, ordering

a hot chocolate with the same sprinkle of this
and splat of that, his tongue practically licking

my bottom lip? *The Family of Man* echoes
from the past, blood spurting from whipped cream machines,

cracked-open smiles and long, blue sleeves. Like
dripping canvases, a spray of abstracts,

Picasso and his little cubist lookalikes.