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There is an image on the mantle piece in her great aunt's house that shows a couple, newly married. They are laughing, waving a huge knife with a white ribbon, in front of a three tiered wedding cake. A silhouette of the best man is cast onto the flocked wallpaper behind them. He is holding a beer glass. Each time she looked at the photo she tried to work out who he was.

Every second Sunday morning when she came to visit for morning tea, just after early church, she looked again. She always stayed long enough for pre-lunch sherry. One week she tried looking while the kettle was being boiled and the old lady was out of the room. When she came in with the tea things she laughed at the intensity of her young relative's gaze but couldn't remember the answer to her question. He was definitely familiar, though probably not related. All the men had the same style then, no particular haircut or suit sense. He looked like the rest of the men she could remember, apart from the special ones, brothers and uncles, perhaps he was a cousin, there were lots of them. Anyway, it didn't matter who he was, it was the couple who was important. It was their day and they had been quite happy.

She returned another day and looked again after the tea things were cleared away. He had a strong nose and it looked as if there was smoke coming from the glass. So it must be a smoking cousin. No-one in the next generation smoked, it was old fashioned and weak now, not strong, macho and sexy.

At home she looked into the gilt mirror left to her by her aunt, the seamstress, trying to see her profile. It wasn't the happy couple reflected back at her, though it should be, they were related.

Her friend had told her a secret. A family secret, lots of families had secrets. She was quite sure hers didn't. What she didn't know about her family was simply the benign

effects of memory loss. She thought if she could see the old lady's photo and hear the sound of the celebration she would know, if she drank enough tea and stayed long enough for pre-lunch sherry she could find out. At night she would picture them just before going to sleep and revisit the image in slow motion in her dreams. Looking at his shadow, smelling the cigarette and beer in the glass.

The next time she went, she took her friend with the secrets and showed her the mantle piece picture. Again, during the kettle boiling she picked it up and stared closely at the figures holding the knife. Her friend laughed and made comic suggestions about family secrets. She kept looking at the shadow on the flocked wallpaper. This time drinking the sherry she half remembered a story, something she couldn't see but had heard, something unpleasant, frightening, violent. On the cool walk home she caught her reflection in a window. He must belong to her somehow.

One Sunday morning the old lady was sick with fever. This time she made the tea and brought it to her bedside. She sat holding the other woman's cold, wrinkled hand and told her how she had looked hard in her aunt's gilt mirror, longing to catch a glimpse of the wedding smoker in her own face. The old lady promised to tell what she could remember. She was feverish and fell quickly into the story of the happy couple drawing ever closer to the smoking silhouette.

But the old lady fell into a delirious sleep. The younger woman held her hand tenderly. All that tea and sherry and she hadn't been able to see. She felt disgusted, a ripping sensation lurched through her stomach. It wasn't nausea, it was different, betrayal mixed with fear and sadness.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Jan Idle.