

genetics is only the half of it

I've been told since what seems like forever

how I have my father's eyes - mum's lips and hips - brother's hair

these similarities we share, drawing up Punnett squares
to compare genotypes and chromosomal configurations

but it's just DNA. we're family.
we share more than just stories in sepia

we exchange pieces of each other

those chocolate brown eyes were exchanged over garden fences alongside jars of olive oil and
apricot jam

we remember my great-grandfather in my mum's lentil salad and my brother's broad shoulders

my stubbornness reminds my father of his own mother
her steadfastness and the fights in the upstairs bedroom

but the record player in our living room that spins Vince Jones at dinnertime
makes my own mother tear up as she remembers my nonna and her love for jazz and strong
coffee

I've inherited their complexion, and when I make gnocchi according to her recipe

I think I can smell her perfume and remember the way she would say
andiamo! let's go
as if each day was an adventure

and I wonder
is her penchant for handsome Italians
a dominant or recessive gene?

either way, it's these motley traits and shattered shards of stories

equal parts fact and fiction

passed hand to hand

that hold us together, and remind us – genetics is only half of our story.

