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Yo-Yo (For Allison Franklin)

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YO-YO (FOR ALLISON FRANKLIN)

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My granddaughter's palm presses
the shiny yo-yo in my hand.
"Make it go and come back,"
she demands. What she has passed
to me is a Saturday in September,
Kress' Five & Dime in Knoxville,
1950. I am ten and stand
with my father and two uncles
watching the yellow-skinned man's
knife flick across the white wooden
surface, carving palm trees
to shade our names, a swash
of letters swirled in the sand
of childhood's lost beach.
What tricks to dazzle us—
Walk the Dog, Rock the Cradle—
he does with ease,
finishes with the flourish
of *Around the World*. This circle
of four is one, bound by name
and new Duncans tucked in our pockets,
thumbs caressing the Braille
of *Dennie, Gene, J. D., Danny*
etched across a middle stripe
of color. "Come on, Papaw,
make it go," and the yo-yo slips
from my hand, a soft sift
of names unspooling down a single
strand from this empty hand,
awaiting that tug to return it
safe again in my palm.