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## Real Life Episode

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# Real Life Episode

by Christopher Brissom

At Florence and Bob's surprise anniversary party (fiftieth!), my Aunt Blanche gets a little tipsy as she is wont to do at large social occasions. The food, prepared by daughter-in-law Ruth, is quite delicious: Waldorf Salad, marinated chicken, a vegetable lasagna, tiramisu. The open bar leads naturally to

Blanche donning my cousin Rachel's six-foot long mermaid wig, all tangled cheap blonde nylon atop her frowzy perm, as she sashays queen-like to the center of the conservatory. En route, someone offers a purple boa found aimless on a coatrack in the back foyer. Yes Sir, a big musical number

is imminent. Cousin Richard waits ready at the organ and with the first ripple of insistence, Blanche Constant (nĒe Dubois--I kid you not) age 84, bewigged, off-balance, steadies her voice across a few husky scales, croaky and soulful as always. It's about 4 P.M., the light cooperates

beautifully on a crisp October Saturday, and we gaze, four generations of continent-strewn relatives, intact, sitting Indian-style on Ruth and Richard's hardwood floor. We have arrived, many of us, from far away. Even Eric (former daughter Laurie), the tall, infamous and fully

mustachioed child of Florence and Bob, is here toasting champagne after twenty years of low-profile. In fact, he hands Blanche another glass as the room hushes beneath he ballade and as I regard my aunt's lack of inhibition, her glorious afternoon cleavage, the keen love of singing

in front of people, I think, I smile, this—*this is my family*

