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Some People Say

by Nick Parnell

Some people say that just before you die your whole life flashes before your eyes. These people always say 'flashes before your eyes'. So it must be like the flickering of an old celluloid cine film, each frame recalling a moment – mundane or great or terrible – of your life. Your first kiss. Your first in love kiss. So intense and focussed and trembling and momentary and eternal. Falling from the apple tree in your grandmother's garden and the pain of your breaking arm. Waiting at the school gates, alone, everyone gone home, dread in your stomach. The day your first child was born, the pain and tears and bone numbing tiredness and love; that love that came from nowhere but was there, fully formed and whole and aching and is still there. Your Dad who did not hug you, did not love you, who left you. Driving round Europe in the van with Pete and Greg and Emma and Flo. Coming home and seeing your grandmother waxy and cold and dead. Eating an ice-cream sundae, on your birthday, in bed with chicken pox.

That time on the beach, barefoot along the sand, a smooth pebble, comforting, held like a child's hand. Playing scrabble on a wet Sunday afternoon, bored and cold. Drinking champagne with the others in the bus shelter on New Years Eve, lost and late. Your mother picking you off the gravel and holding you, enfolding you, keeping you safe.

And now, finally, like a projector bulb burning through the celluloid of your life, a bright light beckons you on, drawing you in, into the dreaming void of the long night.