

Cousin J.

PAMELA WAX

We all knew she kept the Angel
of Death on speed-dial for a face-
to-face over chamomile tea laced with
pills she'd squirreled away.

A stone-deaf woman in her 90's,
she had important things to think
about in her vaulted hush.
She'd been around the block,

was nothing if not pragmatic:
I've had much, I don't need more.
Her men had all emptied the linty
pockets of her heart: her husband,

her firstborn, my brother,
both her brothers, and Hurricane
Harvey—all in short order.
She interrogated the dirt and the blood

and the likelihood of diapers to come.
She enlisted a ministering
angel, a friend, to ferry her across
the border with no fuss, no mess,

leaving us—a cadre of admirers—
golden nuggets and salty tissues
from her pockets, and a hush in which
to ponder important and messy things.