Pressing On

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My grandmother taught me to iron how to bend and shuffle a blouse around the ironing board’s broad nose how to insinuate the heat and steam into a ruffled edge, hold down a pleat, tame a collar. Lesson coveted at boot camp as we set to perfect creases and seams. The marks were complicated enough, but once pressed in, a dungaree shirt became a recruit’s dream. Each item of clothing had a required fold, a set spot on the locker’s shelf, a line on the edge and the lip. Each folding was origami-like in perfection and with each practice, the time and the finished garment, closer to a work of art. Those few of us with the patience and practice were given space, like old-world artisans at some sacred skill and I laughed as we practiced it, this woman’s work, this mundane, mindless craft.