

THE BONE-COVES OF MY MOTHER ●

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My daughter walks into the room
and it's the first time
I notice the roundness

of her belly. I see a baby
backlit in watery nutrients.
I too had once been a baby,

a heart beating fast
like bird wings
inside my mother.

In the genetic pool of her DNA
I formed liquid eyes and skin
sculpted bone and limbs

blue mouth gaping
suddenly able to swallow.
I could hear muffled voices

and on occasion see
a blurry bright source
of light.

My only intention
to grow
into a familiar shape:

ten delicate fingers and toes
organs tucked into tissue

into bone-coves that became

the machinery of what
is human. Oh, and I was to know
nothing of the promise

my mother made not
to pass on her trauma.
She tried to keep

the burn of the lonely nights
from going deep. The burden
of caring for four children

alone; father absent another night.
The anguish in her bloodstream
like some terrible drug.

It poured into my veins
buzzing like an insect on fire.
Today, I suspect it lies there

like a watchful animal, like
some nameless disease.
I feel it on my tongue,

under my fingernails, in my follicles.
I relive it in the moments of
my first marriage:

his culture, a different language
rolling off tongues, our first child born

in the heat of August.

When I sat alone at parties
not understanding the topic
poking at saucy rice on my plate.

I feel it again in the moments of
my second marriage
child #2, campfire coals burning

and my husband passed out
in the camper before dinner.
And in the moments

among friends and family
yet alone, burrowing deeper.
It has always been like this:

I am my mother
looking out the living room window
waiting. And then my daughter

says they are thinking
of boy names and I see
what great hope she has for him.