

Words Long Since *Forgotten*

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Roses, Pingyi Zhu, Copic Markers

I remember being a kid,
falling off my bike and scraping my knees.
My mother would hurry down the porch,
wiping her floury hands on her apron.
She would carry me into the kitchen
and drip cool water onto each scratch,
all the while humming a song
whose words had long since been forgotten.
But I would push her hands away
and show her I could clean my own wounds.

I remember being a teenager,
waving to my mother
as I waved away a sunny afternoon.
I rode into town in the bed of my friend's rusty old pickup,
letting loose my tangled hair
that flowed as light and free as a bird feather.
I ignored my mother's warnings to be careful
as the tires dug into the dirt and gravel,
because the smell of exhaust rolled in on a cloud of opportunity
and I wasn't about to let it leave without me.

I remember being an adult,
straining to hear my mother's weak voice
through the heavy static that burdened the phone line.
She told me of a time long ago
when she and my father
used to wake the neighbors with their fighting.
But they always made things work
when dollars turned into pennies.
I smiled at the old woman's rambling,
convinced I could solve my own riddles.

I remember being an old woman,
lying alone in a sterile room,
humming the tune of my mother's song
to the beat of my own faint heart mapped out on a screen.
Her voice dripped down and into my veins,
flowing like ink beneath my papery skin.
She showed me a new opportunity
that sang with the words of a ticking clock.
And after all these years of waiting,
I wasn't about to let it leave without me.

