

I watch mother's hands—  
 the needle captured  
 watch the shifting of thin fabrics,  
 between two callused fingers,  
 as she pulls the fragile stitches  
 tighter. I study scars—wonder  
 what she sees when she looks  
 at my hands. She smiles, so I smile  
 back. I'm not supposed to talk,  
 to ask. I'm to see only the deftness  
 of a needle and the bright patterns  
 of cloth, the hidden stitches—  
 the way she laces us gently  
 together with her lies.

Stitches

I was only wanting to rise full-bodied  
 like a heavy wet bird against the grey,  
 suede sky—my mother gesturing,  
 outstretched calloused hands, moist  
 starry eyes. No words. I want to recover  
 the legs of her lies, drape them over  
 my arms as a life preserver, float across  
 the wind for miles, ignoring  
 the drowning.

Carried by the Wind

Sometimes in the night I count  
 the embraces that never come.  
 I call them *perfect*.  
 Even while they shatter  
 like anything else's  
 bones.

Emerging From Broken

My mother, she turns to me:  
 I do not understand her expression.  
 My silence captures the smell of the past.  
 I am hungry again.

The kitchen is draped in silence.  
 The walls bleed for us.  
 We bake, my mother and I,  
 watch the cookies rise up  
 like warm, soft bellies.  
 The room is hot  
 and the oven buzzes  
 with a thousand stings.

Baking

STITCHES



Ariana D. Den Bleyker

In Mommy's Shoes

I used to love playing dress up  
 as a little girl. I saw my mother's  
 closet as a magical dimension,  
 a place filled with beautiful clothes.  
 On me, her blouses became summer  
 dresses, dresses ball gowns, silk  
 scarves belts, and high heels  
 catapults into the future. I spent  
 countless hours staring at myself  
 in the mirror, secretly wishing  
 I was something beautiful heart  
 could wear.

Mona Lisa's Smile

Can I paint what's on my mind,  
 creating my own masterpiece  
 straight from the heart? I've loads  
 of filled tubes, brushes, a canvas  
 large enough to achieve your smile.  
 I mix shades, sweep brushstrokes  
 with little confidence, rely on smudges,  
 charcoal sketches, the imperfection  
 of a little girl's memory too vague  
 to know what's real.

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Stitches

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