

Little Sister Left Behind

by: Samantha Lê

...My birth was plagued with complications. Mother wrestled for nearly two days to rid herself of me, and it almost took her life. As she lay counting the brown, concentric, rain circles like tree rings on the aging ceiling to distract herself from the pain emanating from her abdomen, I stubbornly used my right shoulder to block the only passage out. I wore the umbilical cord around my neck like a scarf, guarding myself from the impending moment where I would have to face the coldness of the world.

The exhausted doctor, one of Father's oldest friends, was beginning to regret the favor he had once asked of Father in school, because the payback was becoming unbearable. Mother's screams echoed inside his head, and the stoic doctor could not find the necessary words to console her. When he woke that morning from a dream about a hairy spider that had been trapped and then died in its own web, he knew immediately that the day ahead was going to be one which would test his courage. After hours of struggling, he finally had to admit defeat and softly told Mother that he could not do what Father had asked of him. There were no miracles left on that hot, trying day to ensure that Mother would be able to bear another child after me--the boy that Father had been waiting for would be lost forever.

Sweat trickled down the tired doctor's flat, Asian nose as he shoved and pulled. His large hands smeared across the inner wall of Mother's abdomen with violent violations. Thoughts of summer soirees and tennis games drifted across his consciousness, and it made him uneasy to know his friend's wife in such an intimate circumstance. His sweat evaporated and mixed with Mother's in the air, as if they were two dragons intertwined inside a conflict. The small room with no air conditioning filled to the rim with their private struggles...

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