**Invocation to Memory**

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Remember when you unwrapped your first born

to run eager fingers over down-soft skin, rapt

in the wonder of the new, the fiercely gentle life.

Remember how you tucked the bundled bottom

against your ribs, how the velvet mouth latched,

how the milk dribbled down engorged breasts,

pooled in the almost-smile of pink lips, the tender

tongue. Remember, too, how the child curled

into your palm during bath time, with what care

you washed each toe, slick as breath, smeared

hope and love into the tiny pores, smoothing

away with touch the trials yet to come.

Remember your father lying, stroked out,

dying in the hospital bed, the front parlor

a crypt, his limbs escaping the cotton sheet,

how he begged you to rub his feet, his smile

the only part unstricken, along with his voice,

lauding the smooth caress of restless hands.

Remember the wrinkled silk of your mother’s

palms, the tremors as she traced the muscles

of your stronger arm, recalling the lost years

when it was her domain to calm fears, heal

sorrow, ease stress, cheek to cheek,

she, caretaker, you, caretaken.

Memory erodes like sandstone, leaving

behind hoodoos carved by the wind of time,

so much loss and pain.