

ROLE REVERSAL

She laid out my days with hand-knit sweaters
and fresh-squeezed juice, unfolded my nights
from a brass-bound chest. The scent of cedar
still brings back the cool feel, the sound
of taffeta quilts puffed with down
and bedtime stories of her own making.
She ironed my manners between Sunday ruffles,
unrolled plans from pink rag curlers.
For years we giggled in duet-- mine the alto part,
hers the same three notes as our door chime.
She filled my head and my big blue cup
with warm good things. She shaped me in her hugs.

But her years turned toxic. And the woman she was
moved away in medicated stages. Now for longer
than I childed her, I have mothered her. Days
rattle past like the withering dryness
of unspilled tears. The brass-bound chest
is the same. But our mouths spread no laughter
between unrehearsed folds of strangeness.