

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Mother Lines

by Janie Reynolds

Five years before your incarnation
I sensed I was being followed.
I was drawn inwards
to the fractals of femininity
recurring in my womb.

And of all the women to come after me,
you, in particular, stood out.
A girl.
With thicker hair than mine.
My daughter.

Five years later
I felt the flutter
of your fully fuelled wings
as you descended from ether to ovary
and then from ovary to womb.
I thickened my walls around you
with blood,
and fed you long before you had a mouth.
Your way was paved with love,
long before you grew a heart.

But I always knew that, one day,
you would want to run ahead.
Too fast,
like a storm,

too wild,
like a torrent.
You wouldn't stay by my side,
as I lolled along
in the gentle breeze
and floated
with the flow
of this river.
You'd catch your toes and trip,
upon the only path you would ever tread
and would surge to the fore,
digging in your heels,
yet finding nothing I hadn't already found
before you.

Because girls these days
like to repeat the mistakes
of the mothers and grandmothers
on whose shoulders they stand.
Driven by the immortality of youth,
they care not
to look back
along the matriline.
Until it's too late.

I always knew that, one day,
I'd become an embarrassment to you.
A mere glance over your shoulder,
my sagging breasts and
greying temples,
my limp,
an abhorrent reminder.
And that,
even though the bricks of your temple
were laid with the cells of my hands,
you'd forget me.

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Yet,
I have, also, always known that
the day will come
when it is you that will sense you're being followed.
That one day in the mirror,
every new wrinkle
will scream 'I told you so.'
And each white hair
will whisper, 'Elder.'

And only then
will you look to me
to answer your big questions.
But, by then,
I'll be standing on the edge of the cliff.
For, every outer Russian doll must crack
to reveal its inner.

You chose, my darling,
not to listen,
placated by the thought that
my spirit would stay yours once I was dead.
But you got it the wrong way round.
I am here for you while I live.
But after that
you're on your own.