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Through Old Eyes

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Through Old Eyes

*“suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me:
for of such is the kingdom of heaven”*

- Matthew 19:14

I.

delicate, eleven, maybe twelve
through tunnel vision, blocking out
memories that will bring tears like

birds at dusk, singing on Market Street lamp pole
flashes come, against her will
flying on replay, this scene of love

raised voices, shouting
rat bat is drunk wit' water on da side
gettin juicy, soundin tipsy, feelin heat
screaming, slapping, punching
crying and cussing
muffled and distorted
feeding on fright
bonding obsession and fear

as the mother takes more, bears more
the child closes her eyes, praying *“dear God, please make it stop”*
silent cries, nose running into tearful fingers, knees curling into belly

as she hears the door slam, relief comes until tomorrow
and she exhales, belly in twists, seeing herself in miniature
jumping from lamp pole to lamp pole

darkness falls over
gentle shaking hands
whispers of *I'm sorry*.

II.

repressed memories flood
plunging back into the five-year old's guarded world
she tries hard to forget, harder to remember why
this flash pierces her skin, holding her from flight

bruises
broken arm
battered face

of another woman
not the mother, but the stepmother
not by the boyfriend, but this time, by the father

same scene, different people in this child's life
claim love, trying to live through anger
building homes in shattered spaces

empty and waiting
too young to understand
yet old enough to see

the child does not speak to the father
she cries for the stepmother
with a tearless sob

she longs for a home
even back home to the mother
where they can cry together with real tears.

III.

Fourteen now, but still too young
yet her eyes open, widened gaze to another broken
window, an endless scary night

worrying if the mother would make it out alive
but the child has to leave
her grandmother, with broken hip and worn heart, says

*"go somewhere safer than this,
I no longer have the fight
in my bones,"*

she whispers in the avocado trees, tossing her walker into lime bush tree,
we skip past broken house on Market Street, sing through East Street,
chant down McCullough Corner and Mason's Edition,

flying over Collins Hill wall,
its design meant to keep certain people out,
so we learnt to fly, wishing for something else, something better.