POETRY

Domestic Scene with Victorian Ruins & a Daughter Listening to Matilda at 2 a.m.

by Paola Lee



"Water Droplet" by Yuliia Khovbosha

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Jane Austen, who understood that women
could disappear elegantly without ever leaving the room,
never wrote mothers like mine.

At 2:17 a.m., Harry Styles sings *you can let it go*

through headphones failing on the left side.

I rinse uncooked rice from my fingertips,

the way you taught me: swirl, drain, wait for the water to clear.

The kitchen smells of wet concrete and burnt garlic.

The refrigerator trembles every few minutes.

Rainwater gathers beneath the sink

in a basin we never replace.

Every few days, you empty it before it overflows.

Mother, your voice enters me surgically:

small domestic knives mapping the body

with the precision of someone taught

that love must leave evidence.

You ask,

what is wrong with you?

Softly enough for the sentence

to survive adulthood.

Your voice travels room to room

like inherited weather,

like humidity swelling old doorframes

before a storm.

Sometimes I think care arrived this way:

not through grand declarations,

but through repaired hems,

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rice measured by hand,

water caught before it flooded the floor,

garlic browning in oil long after everyone else had gone to sleep.

You held me like the way frightened people hold water:

carefully,

reverently,

already expecting loss.

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