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The Gift

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The Gift

MINDY TAYLOR

My mother is on her way, leaving a trail of jewelry,
books, handbags, hairpins, and her words,
“Whatever will you do without me?”
Her thick hands work at their knitting
then cast off into the clear, cool pond
of sleep, leaving behind hope and worry,
deeds and daring.

My father, too, is on his way.
He lives in Vegas in a utility apartment
close to the strip.
He doesn't gamble.
He leaves my brother and two wives and two sons
from another marriage and eight empty buildings
and files of warranties and bankruptcy papers filed
in the courthouse and other records of his doings
and his undoing reported in the local paper
and in his children's compositions or diaries or letters
to him that they've filed under “f”
for father or failure or futility
or for frail, remarkably free of hope.

Hope, the gift they want to leave with me.
Take it with you, I tell them, white shiny ribbons,
silver cardboard box, burden, boon, frightening package
of what can become, take it with you:
bones of extinction rattle inside.