

## **State Fair Baby — September 1, 1971**

I.

I arrived amidst  
the smoke of distant fires  
and blackened expectations,  
alone and  
screaming onto white sheets  
with a faint  
but palpable weave—  
She with me, and no one else.

Then and now,  
the weave of family binds  
us two and the absent, missed ones—  
she the warp, they the woof.  
Loyalty pulls like a bloodied cord:  
it's the thread that binds  
and unravels  
generations of fabric.

II.

I've tried to plot my life clearly,  
to measure it in simple calendar days,  
the tiny grids in cotton weave.

I dodge snarls,

blood clots—

but I sometimes fail,  
skidding into another's conversation,  
smoke that hasn't cleared  
in twenty-seven long years.

I've heard this story

year to year,

before wishes and glinting birthday cakes.

"Your father wasn't there."

I smile, red-faced yet again.