



The Fever

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Her glassy eyes search for me,
glazed and unfocused.
Her limbs move as if wading through the thickest of air
with cheeks blazing red and splotchy.
The fever is palpable even before
I press her limp body against mine.

The rocker
that had long been forgotten,
neglected for the fast pace
of the world's discoveries,
creaked back to life.
Back and forth,
in and out,
we rocked to her labored breathing,
as the sky that peeked through the curtains
gradually turned from
dark indigo to hazy blue.

Cherish this,
the voice in my mothering mind whispered,
missing her infancy
filled with these quiet predawn moments,
my heart beating against hers.
But louder voices interrupted this calm:
echoes of other mothers
who held their fireball babies
before a ringer of tests and procedures
provided alarming diagnoses.
The angel on my shoulder,
the voice of rationality and sensibility,
whispered, *It's just a fever. All toddlers get them.*
While the devil,
the mimicker of fearful outliers,
parroted the results of recent children in clinic:
Meningitis, sepsis, encephalitis, leukemia.

When my toddler emerges a day later,
bursting with energy and curiosity,
the rocker fades back to oblivion
and my exhaustion is in keeping pace
rather than worrying.
And I reflect on those other mothers
who I sat beside,
holding their hands,
watching as the wheels churned
to process the medical journey ahead.
I didn't realize then,
that all the while
I was unconsciously,
even secretly,
praying
to spare me,
my babies,
their fates.

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