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Distance

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Distance

She learned distance early
shivering under clutched covers,
a cocoon shield from the screaming,
a refugee from exploding emotion

Distance at the dinner table,
vacant sunshine smile to avoid
the anger in her father's eyes,
the defiant tilt of her mother's chin

She learned distance early
huddled in the refuge of a dark closet,
muttered songs protection from the flashing
red blue red blue chasing down her brother

Distance in the pew, spine stiff,
mind dancing with memories of silent prayers,
pride in each salty drop treasured on
the tip of her tongue

She learned distance early and remembered
alone in a crowd, cringing from the past
distance in her eyes, her smile
burning with shame and hurt anger

She learned distance early and remembers
the importance of covers and closets
the safety of the dark
the refuge of solitude
the importance of distance

– Beth Widmaier '95