

Childhood

The afternoon cruises
after badminton, lemonade
and chutney sandwiches.
Voices are like ribbon made
for unwrapping the past.
Syllables of imaginary laughter
blend with the real, as I recall
the warmth of uncles, aunts, cousins
left behind in foreign cities:
Mumbai, London, Goa.
I think of the bright day when dad
flew our kite on Primrose Hill.
It's hard to say what matters.
Everything fragments,
defers to time's calibrations,
the long shadows are deceptive.

I piggy-back my daughter
in summer's leaf-light.
We swim laps in tandem,
riding a pink foam noodle,
sinking fast,
her tiny arms a choker for my neck.
I'm weak to her commands, her tears.
In any competition, I must lose.
The dragonfly's flight is a tease
never kissing its reflection,
a cross-stitch lacing the pool.
The distant hum of the freeway
sounds like a hole in the heart,
the softest turbulence.
The garden is a green humidicrib.

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