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Between Her and Me

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Between Her and Me

My mom hands me a two-sided razor blade,
rests her calves on the living room carpet
waiting as I carve the callous under her foot
to a pallid bulb burning the night hours,
and I tell her that today
I studied a Rembrandt in printmaking class,
smelled copper and thought of her—reminded of
steel machines jetting Smithsonian flyers as
we bundled them with rubber bands
one summer; where this morning
she left behind another 8 hours to work
on General Electric, AT&T, Evergreen letters
assembled into postal sacks
for \$10 an hour
so she can afford rice, poultry,
and help with my tuition—
praying that I might speak an unbroken
English tongue and never return to the factory.
Her spine curls forward as she leans in
closer and hair falls like wine poured
down her shoulders in silver and black—
it doesn't hurt anymore, she says,
do my left foot.