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City/ What My Mother Told Her Daughter, Me

Kristin Perkins
Brigham Young University

Lexi Johnson
Brigham Young University

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What My Mother Told her Daughter, Me

Kristin Perkins

What my mother told her daughter, me
small enough to form a cradle with two strong forearms
you were never small enough to know completely
-a past and present and future, you reached out with tiny hands
to grip at all three
and somehow the fact that I couldn't know who you would be
seemed to stop me from knowing the child I held
at least for longer than the next meal
the next nap time



CITY
by Lexi Johnson

the next unintentional toy (a screwdriver, cardboard box, pen)
the next fear, hope, laugh
as I prayed that my little girl would not hurt like I had hurt
missing the mistakes I had made
wanting “woman” to mean something more
more than the amalgam or what everyone else thought
(pouty-lips on a long-skirted doll, glowing with the ache of pregnancy
good cook, cleaner, kisser, good at fixing, twisting her own hair, her own body
always not too much and just enough, balanced on a thread, pygmalion)
wanting “woman” to be, for you, a thing unique and strong
and knowing you were going to have to figure it out
sometimes alone

(What I could tell my mother: I have had a good example)