

Red and Lavendar Silk

by Julie Ann Weinstein

Swatches of Chinese silk in vivid red and lavender fly through the air. My granddaughter in her mid-thirties reaches for the cloth. I see in her mirror a shape forming; a slim, gray haired woman with a spring in her step. I pause to admire my reflection and pass over the pen with special instructions. I say, "This is how you will reach me on scraps of silk; yes, my granddaughter, write to me now and the slips of silk will fly." No answer. My granddaughter wakes up. I hope she remembers the silk-laden dream.

Days pass. The dream she will not speak about. I tell her when she tosses in her sleep to reach for the pen on her nightstand. The cap is missing. I moved it one night and placed it on the pillow hoping the plastic end would move her from sleep. She didn't notice. The cap made its way to her toes. I dropped it in the center of the blanket and watched it move to her calves and back again to her head through the course of the night, and all the while I whispered to her to pick up the pen. Another day turned to evening. She doesn't rise from the bed. Her breath is growing faint. I shake the mattress. She murmurs, "Grandma." "Yes, I'm right here, child." I hold her hand and we take a walk in the space of her dream. "The silk flies," I tell her. "You can see it now." "Yes, Grandma." She is now wrapped in silk this granddaughter of mine, protected in the cocoon of sleep. Her breath is so soft, too soft. I get scared. Her husband arrives back from a trip. He is alarmed that his wife has not risen from bed in three weeks. I can't believe it's been this long, but I am a ghost and time is not so easy to measure now. No food has graced her lips, he says to the paramedics on the telephone after searching through the refrigerator and cupboards. It is as he left it. She calls out, "Grandma, Grandma." I place the pen cap in her hand. She squeezes it. The past and the present become one. We are in the kitchen. I am sitting at her table feeding her chicken broth in a tea cup. She takes cautious, tentative sips. I tell her don't fear the food, though I know

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she will for we have walked in the future. She is mostly bones, this granddaughter of mine, as skinny as I got during my last year. The tea cup crashes to the floor. I see not brown soup broth, but blood. I stagger back. Have I made my blood a meal for my granddaughter? Sirens blare. I pick up the shards of the broken tea cup from the past and glue the present together. I see another cup of warmed chicken soup. It is golden brown. My granddaughter squeezes on the cap of the pen and tells me she will write. I tell her to please eat of this world, the food of sustenance and of the soul.

The ambulance arrives. They take her to the hospital, saying they arrived just in time. I tell her that past and present are suspended in this space between dreams. I spread the red and lavender silk on a clothesline and wait for my granddaughter's words, knowing they will be the wind to blow the drapes of time and dimension in this space we share.

