

## Retrospective Self-Portrait

*by*

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I'll put them up high on the crown  
of your head—butterflies, fluttering on brittle springs.  
You know-it-all little fiend, breathe a lispy secret  
behind your petal-shaped palm.  
Which way is the second star to the right?

I'll tie your shoelaces and your guilt  
neatly in a bow, my bratty little lamb; drink  
the bruise out of your knees, as you blow bubbles  
and raspberries—my kingdom for  
one last look upon your snaggletooth.

I'll dress you up in black lace crinolines, my marionette,  
then watch you twirl, toe-points in.  
Why do you hoard your playthings like they're  
grudges? Poor thing, they're leaking out your  
rainbow-stained fingertips.

I'll cross-stitch serenades and forget-me-nots;  
offerings thrown at your feet, my bashful vendetta.  
Then wait till you're fast asleep, buried under  
Grandpa's leather jacket,  
so I can steal the freckles from your nose.

I bleed for you, fledgling engraver, so you have  
something to play with. Dip your brush  
in the gaping crater on my ribs, and  
doodle sanguine reveries. Whatever you unearth  
is yours to keep.

I'll untether the stitches  
on your chin—just so you remember how it feels.  
Languidly, patiently, I will tear up every seam  
to map you out, misguided wonder.  
I'll wear your lies around my neck.

Now skip back to the beginning, pet,  
and read me properly this time.

**Poet's Note**

“Retrospective Self-Portrait” is an amalgamation of memories, artifacts, merits and flaws, addressed to a little girl. Its core sentiment is that of healing the present self by catering to the inner child, and it is my attempt to reconcile the conflicting emotions of affection and bitterness, gratitude and regret.