

Hands, an Apache Prayer

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Only a few hours old, you held
my hand for the first time. Tiny fingers cocooned
in yours—tan, covered in age spots, with small
birthmarks that I grew to count.
Fourteen.

Twenty-six years later, you held my
hand a final time. A breathing tube filled
your throat while you traced impatient
circles along embroidered yellow flowers.

Your hands remained weeks after, guiding me as I
picked shards of glass from the floor of dreams; white
cactus flowers among ears of blue and white corn.
Yours steadied mine, soaked in tears that
tasted like Sunday Morning Mass.

We deserved more time in corn fields sprouting
from rust colored dirt. More time swimming up red-rocked
streams, its waters rushing loudly down mountain sides. I
needed more time under hot Arizona suns, brighter
than the false fluorescence of that hospital room.

Your last six days still lay scribbled in your cursive: the
last prayer, a hand, that I still cling to.

You are never parted from the beating of my heart.