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Some days are dainty and graceful and they whisper into your life with soft-footed pirouettes and eager smiles, hoping to please you. Those are the days you save in your scrapbook with bits and pieces of your heart—a train ticket home, the ribbon that held your first flowers from a boy. Some days, on the other hand, are like a pipe to the skull, a thief bent on rendering you helpless while they rifle your pockets and steal your wallet.

My mother and her bright orange hair like a flame that never burns out was standing on my front porch when I rode home after helping Meryl finish peeling the shrimp.

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I could practically feel the lead pipe whizzing in the air.

“What are you doing?” she demanded, all five-foot-even of her, her hands fisted on razor-thin hips, her shoulders drawn up to try to make her seem bigger than the wisp of skin and bones loosely held together by the low-cut yellow mini-dress a teenager would feel exposed too much.

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“Why was your door unlocked?” Then she raked me up and down with an appraising glare. “And why are you out of bed? You’ve obviously had a seizure, you should be in bed.”

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And *bam*, there was the impact, the jolt, the crush to the skull; her deduction that there’d been a seizure. Where was early onset senility when one needed it?

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For those of you who haven’t met my mother... well, let’s just say that I knew, without

going to look and without my ability kicking in, that the five dollars I’d found in my jeans before washing—the five dollar bill I’d shoved in a drawer underneath the old flashlight with no bulb, and the pair of rusted gardening shears I kept meaning to replace—yeah, that five dollars was now

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comfortably residing in her purse. Or bra. Or whatever pocket she had handy,

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“I did not have a seizure. I have the flu.”

“Bunk,” she snorted, her rheumy eyes glaring at me over the rims of her bright pink tortoiseshell spectacles. Then her voice dropped low, as if to avoid an audience. That alone should have been enough warning to flee, because my mother had the soul and finesse of a carnival barker, playing to the crowd, whether we were in line for confession at church or not-so-quietly buying my first box of tampons. “Don’t lie to your mamma, Avery Marie. I’ll keep quiet about your seizure,” she said, edging toward me like a bright yellow beetle. I swear, if she had an overcoat, she’d be saying, “psssst, show you somethin’ mister,” out of the corner of her mouth.

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“Flu,” I interrupted. “I have the *flu*.” I stepped back from her. Two could play this determination game. “Be careful, or you’ll catch it.”

She snapped her fingers in front of my nose. “I don’t have time for this, Avery Marie. I have seen your seizures all your life, so don’t go trying to con your mamma.” She latched onto my arm and leaned in to whisper, “I’ll tell everyone it’s the flu, if you’ll help me with this one client.”