



**“The Golden State”  
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I was raised in California,  
where my mother sang these songs.  
They ripple through my skin,  
I sang them softly all along.

Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night,  
with my stomach twirling,  
my thoughts still swirling,  
from the dreams I’ve forgot.

My cheeks keep turning red,  
from little moments I’ve tried to forget,  
heavy like the silence of someone not brave,  
scared to travel down a path roughly paved.

So I’ll sit in my suburban home,  
with my rambling that shakes the frames.  
I’ll eat my dinner like I’m grown,  
I’ll sing my mother’s songs with no shame.

Five years down the line,  
I learn the meaning of each word.  
Why my mother named me a bird,  
why she made California our home.

She’ll whisper it’s okay through the phone  
because I was made with brittle bones.  
and I fear turning into my father,  
though I can never deny that I’m his daughter.

There is something terrifying about living alone,  
I keep imagining crying on the subway,  
or breaking at the smell of cigarettes.  
There are days I still think about the ashtray.

I still dream of my father's half-body,  
and even worse, his torn soul.  
I cannot fight a man who's fine with not living whole,  
a man resigned with letting his daughter go.

I am grateful for my mother,  
she knew commitment doesn't mean to suffer.  
My mother is silent when she prays,  
she didn't speak to him for days.

While it was my father who truly named me,  
it was my mother who gave it meaning.  
She never believed that birds should be in cages,  
they should be free to fly off dreaming.

In the culture in which she was born,  
girls are raised to be wives.  
Those ideas were how she was derived,  
yet she moved to California because of a yearning.

She saw an opportunity, where a bird is free to fly,  
so how can I be scared when there are no limits in my sky?  
I cannot blame a man who did not raise me,  
it's only my fears who betray me.

I was raised in California,  
where my mother knew a bird belonged.