

Bound

They cut the rope the day I was born.

It was the longest day of the year.

Though with that cutting
Another rope took hold,
Binding us inextricably and tighter
Than that tenuous coil of matter
Created by your body for mine alone.

Your problem child –

Left foot first and right bent up;
My toes were at eye level.

Even then I refused to lie down.

I wanted to stand –
Mimicking you,
Inside your outside and in miniature.
Defying the natural order of things.

They told you that it couldn't be done,
That it would hurt us.
They finally listened when you stopped
talking—
And took the picture
That I have wanted to find and never really
looked for.

Tiny bones delicate in their newness
But so very strong with intent –

My head was in your chest,
Your heart my pillow.
Its unconditional beating my whole world.
Fed by the rope they cut and nourished by the
one they couldn't.

I heard your voice from within,
Muffled and strong,
As you carried me through a life I did not yet
need to know.

But you had us in mind the whole time,
We were in it together –
Bound and lashed to a mutual destiny
That neither of us could escape.

And I tried.

Later on I struggled against that rope,
Desperate and thrashing,
Trapped and seething –
A bound animal.

My crazed attempts to rid myself of my bindings
Only made them seem tighter –
Stifling and infuriating,
I saw them cut into and wound me.

It was my railing against them that caused the pain,
My skin bruised and raw,
Burnt and seeping in rage and fear and wrath.

The rope you wound with your hands –
So unlike mine.
The fibers painstakingly chosen and
Painfully acquiesced.

Woven into the pattern out of
love and care and brute necessity
for your problem child.

I strained and struggled against that rope
And it left impressions on my self.
Each twist and braid,
Every knot and fray that you shaped and fashioned –
Pressed permanently and forevermore
Into me.

Part of me is you.

I appreciate now the beauty of my bindings.
They were and are what makes us the same.
It has become a comfort—
I fumble in fear for it in dark places and it is there.
I feel it tucked in around me and can sleep unplagued.

No longer the noose or the restraints of the disturbed,
It is part of me –
My spine, my security, my organic heirloom.
I have absorbed it and braided in my own
Fibers of being.

It is no longer the tightrope to be crossed precariously,
But the support that keeps me upright and pulls me along.
I'm standing alone and with it.

It is what pulled me to the safe side of that fence.
The rope that was born with me,
That knotted us together,
That grew and strengthened and twisted and tightened
Is good.

Yet it is the feverish war I waged on that rope
That has had the most lasting impression.
I am scarred by the burns.

But I realize now that they were self-inflicted.

Emily C Holmes Turner