



Illustration by Erica Aitken

My mother's hands

When I was young
My mother's hands were strongholds
Pulling the weight of her ancestors
Across an entire ocean
So that one day
My brother and I
Might be able to say
That we lived the American dream.

For years, my mother's hands
Have been those of a physical therapist
Day in and day out
Giving her strength
To children with none of their own.
Her exhausted hands still
Would tuck me in every night.

My mother's hands now
Are the textbook picture of osteoarthritis.
She hides them when we take photos,
And complains of how ugly they are—
Her hands which have built mountains.

I look at her hands and I see
Swollen joints, nodules,
Knobby knuckles glaring at me,
The product of her hard work—
My mother who stands at 4 feet 9 inches tall,
But whose spirit towers over skyscrapers.

The same hands that have held me forever
Now struggle to grip
The handle of her morning mug
Of coffee.
My mother's hands are falling apart
Before my eyes.

My mother's hands
Were her gift to me.
On the soonest day possible,
I will tell her to pick which planet she likes best,
And I will scoop it up and hold it there
Gently in my hands, with all that I am
Because of her,
And I will give my mother the world.

Gabrielle Espiritu