State Fair Baby - September 1, 1971

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I.
I arrived amidst
the smoke of distant fires
and blackened expectations,
alone and
screaming onto white sheets
with a faint
but palpable weave—
She with me, and no one else.

Then and now,
the weave of family binds
us two and the absent, missed ones—
she the warp, they the woof.
Loyalty pulls like a bloodied cord:
it's the thread that binds
and unravels
generations of fabric.
II.
I've tried to plot my life clearly,
to measure it in simple calendar days,
the tiny grids in cotton weave.
I dodge snarls,
blood clots—
but I sometimes fail,
skidding into another's conversation,
smoke that hasn’t cleared
in twenty-seven long years.
I’ve heard this story
year to year,
before wishes and glinting birthday cakes.
"Your father wasn't there."
I smile, red-faced yet again.