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Genetic Code

by Judy Bertelsen

A hometown friend said, "When you drove up,
I thought it was your mother in the car."
I have heard her voice in mine,
share her brain, her damaged heart, her skin.
When I was young, the doctor said, "You have bad skin.
Your mother has bad skin; you have it, too."
Nothing could be done.

Seeing me off, she said, "I'm willing
you should go away. You will be unhappy
and I cannot stand
to live that heartbreak twice."

One night I called. Wild, with strained
heart and raging brain
she slammed down the phone.
I called back; she softened.
we talked straight and said goodbye.
Ten days later she died.

Dream Fragment:

My mother floats in the
dark night air, hovering
almost out of view.
The pink climbing rose blooms
in lush profusion, waving and weaving
about the white porch columns.
I am surprised the rose still lives. I want
cuttings for my garden now.

New growth flourishes
where the holly bush had been:
a peach-tinged yellow peace rose
tall as a tree.

