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Gendered Etiquette

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Blood gushed from the open gash.
Skin lay eroded and separate
as the distance between river banks.
She imagined one would find
a rickety wooden bridge
and dare to cross
from one side of her knee to the other.

Regretfully,
it would be a while
before it matched the perfection
of its counterpart.
Scratches and scars remained
reflecting sessions of full-force play
jam-packed with concrete landings of precision,
proof that her constant battles
with the smallest grooves in the ground
would cause her to falter.

The marks bore witness to
rugby and soccer,
three-flies-in, and pop-up tackle.
The white dust that accumulated
in the creases and folds of her skin
told stories of sand castle adventures,
wrestling matches,
and floor crawls.

She sat quietly
beside Mother’s bed
picking at mangled skin,
awaiting the routine repair.
Ointment and
oversized bandage in hand,
Mom issued her usual stern warnings
coupled with the timeless saying:
“Girls don’t play rough.  
Be careful next time!”

But until next time,  
her band-aid would shine  
like the brightest star,  
waving like a banner of pride  
while peeping from the hem of her Sunday dress.