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Dancing Ballerinas

by Gwen Ames

Darkness settles in.

Gnarled sheets wrap her midriff,
as she clutches the neatly stitched border
with her five frail fingers
really strong for her age,
 yet too small,
 too weak.

Noises from the dark alarm her
as she pretends to sleep,
eyes tightly shut with rehearsed pose;
viewing dancing ballerinas
on the inside of her eyelids;
whimsically colored clouds engulf them.

Feet shuffle across the floor
from the distance, and sweep the dust
upon creaking planks under her bedroom door.

Dance, ballerinas, dance!
Faster and faster!
running in outstretched arms.

Almost breathless from an episode
of fainting heart and cloudy head,
a familiar figure closely cuddles,

front to back in unsafe bed,
warming a body...
that became cold.

Calloused palms stroke unbending arms.
Bold colors replace dancing figures.
Inaudible music roars as jungle drums
lift her nightgown
and in darkness
sweeps away colors.

Fireballs shoot through the clouds
from unseen cannons.
Feeling her legs again but believing
this time they will break
stomach cramps intrude...
clouds drift away

Fireworks rapidly under fire
as the shadow hovers.

Legs will break this time!
Her body arches
with forced movements...
not

in response.

Ballerinas- look for ballerinas-
jumping through the air-
frenzied- spinning and spinning-
consuming themselves with dizziness
moving the pain...
to her head.

Silence protects her illusions
of losing love,
purchased with whispers of words
that have repeated themselves often
along with threats...
to tell no one.