

*Mother:*

Sometimes I catch myself staring at my reflection for too long.

Before bed, before school, before I bathe.

From every eyelid crease to the shape of my jaw,

From the shape of my shoulders down to my knobby knees,

I trace parts of her that she doesn't like.

Yet she calls me "Cô gái đẹp của tôi (My beautiful girl)."

Stare for too long and I begin to see all her hopes and dreams.

Everything she ever wanted to be,

What she wanted to do with her life. Where and what she wanted to study.

*"I'm sorry I took that away from you."*

She tells me life happens and that she wouldn't have it any other way.

I know she lies.

Sometimes I am scared of my reflection, scared of who I really am.

Am I just a shell of my mother's empty hopes and dreams?

Is that all I will ever be?

No, I am my mother's "cô gái đẹp (beautiful girl)."

But I wish my mother knew how beautiful she was.