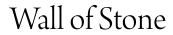
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WALL OF STONE

Beth Turner Ayers

My brother called to say the words She could not say herself - to me Her sister, who shared her bed when small The one who walked, side by side Never breaking stride on dark mornings In heat and cold we challenged the status quo The two of us together, the "papergirls" Later walking side by side at the edge of the sea Gathering shells and dreams

The wall went up - but I did not build it Did not place uneven wobbly stones In a haphazard pile, between us Did not spread concrete between each stone But I did not try to scale the wall To peek at the other side Or reach out to dislodge a single stone Did not search for a path around it To get a glimpse of my little sister Once in a while I would tap on the wall Like the Morse code that passed between us In the darkness of our shared room, long ago Little response floated to my ear So I waited with words unspoken Allowing my baseless perception To restrain my hammer and chisel While she did the same - each of us assuming And time passed around us...

So much time that wisdom came with age And an email came with more than a brief reply

A phone call lasted with laughter and shared thought

The wall began to crumble - slowly but surely Then suddenly, it was toppled by cancer Another shared experience That opened the line of communication

And I began to realize that wall of stone Had always been unnecessary fabrication