The Possessive
by Sharon Olds

My daughter – as if I
owned her – that girl with the
hair wispy as a frayed bellpull

has been to the barber, that knife grinder,
and had the edge of her hair sharpened.

Each strand now cuts
both ways. The blade of new bangs
hangs over her re-brown eyes
like carbon steel.

All the little
spliced ropes are sliced. The curtain of
dark paper-cuts veils the face that
started from next to nothing in my body –

My body. My daughter. I'll have to find
another word. In her bright helmet
she looks at me as if across a
great distance. Distant fires can be
glimpsed in the resin light of her eyes:

the watch fires of an enemy, a while before
the war starts.

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