

Iona Road

Caedence Jones

Gravel and grit poke and pester the arches of my feet,
Tattoo them with countless calluses and embedded granulate,
Drawing blood I could not yet see,
A permanent reminder of my days on Iona Road.
While elm helicopters flutter my hair,
Spindling strands with each swirl.
The red and white stripes ripple,
Like the stream behind the forest,
Just downhill from the house,
Filled with water spiders and scotch pebbles,
Cold as a warning.
And when the sun peaks just over the hill,
It kisses its surface, and scatters sapphire sparkles
On the dewy forest floor.

Violets bruised purple and pink peonies adorn the porch,
Their smell no longer as sweet,
But they softly sing to themselves if you listen,
Flirt familiarly with the hummingbirds.
The abandoned tire swing rots in the yard,
Collects the tears that roll from the branch's eyes each storm,
Sways and sloshes with the trees.
While the rusty trampoline watches from afar,
Carpeted in leaves and tattered netting,
Envious of the companionship.

My grandma calls out to me,
And I can smell the fear of God on her wrinkled, leather arm—
Or maybe it was the sour sweetness of her Chanel N°5,
Suffocating the stale air around her.
Walking through the door felt like entering a chapel,
Especially when crosses loom over doorframes in each room,
Hitching and tossing in torture when I enter,
Like a noose begging to fulfill its fate.
The only picture of her murdered mother rests on the oak side table
Just at the end of the couch, almost out of reach—

Blurry and smudged just like her memory had become.

The stairs still creak and moan just as loud as they did when I was
nine,
Sneaking to and fro on Easter Sundays to escape the inescapable.
The guest bedroom, despite all the times my grandma claimed she'd
tidy it,
looked like a hoarder's wet dream, as pounds of dust collected on
the books,
Packed loosely on top like snowfall just after Christmas.
And the bed that stole my youth sits untouched in a corner,
With the same navy-blue sheets,
That I bet his stubborn stench and Axe Apollo still linger on.
I flinch at the ting of the metal bedframe,
Too familiar with the taste of its coating.

I still wince when I hear his name,
Spoken in conversations during the holidays
Or tagged in Facebook posts
Congratulating him on his baby—
Thank God it's a boy—
I can't run away from family.
My legs will never take me far enough,
And my arms can only drag my limp, lifeless body so far.
I notice fingerprints indented from the soot on the Bible,
And I can't help but wonder if he ever really read it.

A shot rings deep in the woods, eerily echoing out—
I let the sound finish the thought I cannot,
And continue the path ahead, with gravel still stuck to my feet.