

This Closure

The search party found her under
the crunch of autumn oak leaves. Rigor mortis
set in three weeks ago.

Quickly,
she was filed next to Bella in the Witch Elm—
and other mysteries. She'll adjust to tight spaces
and purgatory silence.

After the autopsy,
even the anchor woman shrugged. Everyone
followed suit, except for the shadow who defaced
brick walls with accusations.

Three months later,
another college student left a party and never
made it across her front lawn. She too entered her
very own cold case as the town buzzed around
her bruises and hammer-stained flesh.

Finally, my daughter was left alone, so I consoled
her soundlessly. But sometimes,
neighbors knit their eyebrows and perform a frown.

“I’m so sorry...but you found closure, so it’s better now.”

(No, it’s not.)

Aftermath

1.

We shrug at this forlorn

quiet

in December.

In four months the clocks had shifted,

left a residue of deep shadows

under blighted homes after we gave

up the last of our daylight hours, like

rotting meat left in a fridge during

contraflow.

And so, I trade a sideways glance with a two-story

that waits for an owner to sift through

the damage. I tiptoe around a pothole and paint chips

crack, conjure itself drying skin that flakes where

it itched.

And I can't wave past the shattered windows; the streetlights

only produce silhouettes as a reminder.

Before the evening news, I forget in distance.

2.

It won't be long now, before it turns into

rubble and dust, then bulldozed.

The suit-and-tie updates on TV announce the penalties.

I warm fingers on a mug of New Orleans Blend

under the blue tarp roof

and join the collective good riddance

along the new tall grass neighborhood.

So I can walk around the block

next year and forget

backyard voices.

Introvert's Day Off

I packed a suitcase for just myself
then took a trip to winter months. Found
the key to the bedroom in a snow-cruled corner.
Flat-lined in a crowded room so shook
off the hangover in
empty spaces.

So mood landed on carpet
and rested
rested,
rested
grew dim like a lamp when the flimsy blanket
drapes over the shade to welcome the latest
blast of ice in gray sunset.
A slow crawl folded under the blue
comforter; we met as matching garments.

I wasn't far from the throbbing pace.

Below,
first floor lazy fingers dripped
on piano keys. Voices and gestures around
tables shoved to be the latest distraction—
they even searched my number. Dry pens,

red-inked notebooks buried the cell phone
on the other side of the lock and practiced
hums filled in where

Fingers

left. By the final

hour, I retrieved the heavy lids

and parted lips shaped as a sleeping

cap. Evening shift bowed as I

fluttered through closing statements.

Voices—I never itched to joined—blurred

into a low buuuzzz...silence.

(Finally).

Minutes counted with slow breaths.

Until

sleep

entered

muted

walls—

Freeze Warning (Insomnia)

All night, tap water drips to where the drain
gurgles the steady stream, a rhythm gnawing
the skin of my sleep like summer mosquitoes;
winter refuses to swat the faucet into silence.

Outside, oil still leaks—
main rear seal, Larson shook his head. Slippery black
stains, drains a bank account. I inhale for the last
drop, but only the mattress sighs under cabin
fever. I face the digital glow—2:16, so “If I close my
eyes now, five hours to...”

Useless feigned breaths
prefer to watch the rare instance of an arctic blast,
obsess over ceiling tiles stares and frost
at my window.

I turn over. I blink.

As freezing pipes inside open cabinets brace against
the new Fahrenheit, I peel sleep and, finally, join
the fluid taps on porcelain, wait for expiration.

