

Adulthood greets me like a stranger  
at a family reunion—open arms, a warm  
smile, and the impression that we should know  
each other but don't, because the last time I saw her  
was probably two decades ago when she cradled baby-  
me in her arms and told me to never grow up  
(they all say this and regret it later).

She asks what I'll miss about childhood. I tell her:  
my mother's steady hands slicing watermelon  
wedges for summer Saturdays, big bowls of Frosted Flakes,  
legs crisscrossed on the couch and Perry Mason re-runs  
on the box TV. The sound of my dad's keys in the kitchen door.  
When he leaves. When he comes home.

The ash trees before they cut them all down. Before the bugs could  
kill them first. Before the birds could find new homes.

I'd miss 7pm bedtimes, summertime evenings marked  
by chirping crickets and the neighbor's car. Summertime morning  
sightings of a cardinal. My elderly neighbor who loved cardinals.  
Keeping my window open at night.

Being safe. Sleeping soundly.

I'd miss grass, the kind that falls soft under little barefoot toes—  
the kind that grows on nothing but summer earth and  
sunshine. The glassy surface shimmer when looking up  
from underwater. Sledding headfirst down ice-  
slicked hills and Christmas as Christmas should be—  
When she asks what I'll miss most, I answer this:

Simplicity. The songs of birds. The ability to remember.