

Dawncrest Circle

By Breelyn Burns

Swept glass, from the baseball smashed streetlight
Lined the gutter, twinkling under little dirty feet
As they run wildly, swelling bodies in the sun.

Curdling milk, sour at the mere memory of our summer.
Melting rubber bicycle tires,
Stuck peddling on
Rippling black road rivers.

Dried dead worms, and rainbows of chalk collages
Line children's curbs,
Where pigtailed youths skip rope and discard plastic naked Barbie dolls.

White shreds of last night's dare,
Hang as little paper boundary flags
Pieces of voodoo kid magic
Warding off wandering outsiders.

A familiar fading tune in the distance,
Summons pink grinning sun burnt faces.
The Ice Cream Man.
The only conduit between neighborhood worlds.
Outstretched palms, holding shining pieces of pocket contents,
Meet the man in the yellow truck.

It's the same man as last week, and the week before that,
The never failing patron saint of summer children.
Yet, their grape Popsicle mouths utter no prayers.
Instead, they chuckle ridicule, mocking his heavy foreign accent.
They poke fun, saying "Why don't you get a real job!"
He smiles, providing their sugary rations.
And as he departs, a harsh bursting stink bomb pops behind his seat.
The vile sharp stench sinks the corners of his sad smile.
He rounds the corner, driving off in the orange horizon
He too, a slave to the American dream.

With sugar highs, and spoiled stained faces,
They return to their super soaker massacres
And the scorching street is littered
With red, orange, yellow bits of broken rubber
Wet with ruptured water from front lawn hoses.

The sweet pineapple and barbecue sauce afternoon, soon
Fades as the sun's vengeance dips below the dark house
At the end of the cul-de-sac.
The house where when the sun goes down,
Long green porch lanterns
Turn on.
And black boogie-man shadows,
Dance in their emerald glow.

The house's owner, the weirdest neighbor in the block,
They call Phil the Cat Killer.
Who never answers the door.
And when a missing pet sign shows up on a street sign
Little whispers of that house, and its underground layer,
Pass through cupped hands and eager ears.

Soon the cries of worried mothers filter through the night.
They echo.
Far from battlefields and pirate ships,
Far from Power Rangers and Pokémon cards.
They leave their imagination worlds behind and
Surrender their masks, shields, and squirt guns, for now.

Head toward the cries, and begin their solemn march.
Returning to the unforgiving world of report cards,
Divorce and growing up.

Beneath the broken street light,
Something lies.
Black and now cold, a crow.
Shot by a foul BB gun wielder.
The day's last casualty.