

Love I Had to Grow Alone

-PBC

I was raised in a house where love had no voice.

**The walls kept their secrets,
and the clocks only counted the hours
until the shouting stopped
or started again.**

Nobody came when the nights grew teeth.

**I learned to fold my small body
into the corner of the bed,
arms locked around my own ribs
like a gate no one else remembered to close.**

**I whispered lullabies to the child they forgot,
soft as dust,
“Shh, little one, breathe,
the storm is only passing through us.”**

**Their words were sharp stones
thrown careless across the kitchen table.
I gathered them in my pockets
until I learned to bleed quietly
and smile when asked how school was.**

**I became the quiet keeper
of every tear I wasn't allowed to cry out loud.
I wiped them with the sleeve of yesterday
and told my heart,
“Hold on, we are almost strong enough
to carry ourselves.”**

**Years later,
when the wind howls the old names,
I still reach for my own hand first.
It is warm now.
It knows the way.**

I built a small house inside my chest
with windows that open only for me.
The roof doesn't leak kindness,
but it never runs out either.

And on the worst nights
I sit there alone,
not lonely,
rocking the child they never asked about,
saying,
“We made it.

We are the home
we were waiting for.”