

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.”