

Home

By Chaise Robinson

Home has always been an abstract concept for me,
something feasible to the mind
but just barely
out of touch,
slipping past my fingers
too soft to hold on to something
so solid.
Solid.

A way I never felt between the multiple homes
we drifted between as if
we were refugees.

I have faint memories of homes like a dream—
hard wood floors to carpet apartments
to furniture I can just barely see,
a thumb over the camera lens,
a blur.

It is hard to imagine being stationary—
throughout my life, I have been constantly moving,
a constant state of forced change
that takes me from one place to another,
not always physically.
I still do not know how to be, still—

The face of my mother, struggling
for the words to explain why
he didn't pay the rent again,
why we have to leave again.

Home was empty refrigerators,
vodka bottles in the top drawers.
An exhausted mom who tried her best,
a father who slept and drank pain away,
found it easier to live in the night and ignore the day—
we lived that way.

I remember home as if it was a nightmare
that I woke up from so suddenly
the only thing left was a feeling that you can't shake in the morning.

A sister who never fully recovered
she keeps a photo of our father on the nightstand.

I threw mine away a long time ago.

My spirit is used to the constant unpleasant surprises,
the readiness for danger that never passes, how could it—
when you're used to hearing the walls shake and
the last clear image of your father you have
is one where you have been pressed against
the door of the basement
and
you're not sure whether you'll keep standing
or topple down the stairs—

I keep waiting to fall.

Home has always been an abstract concept for me—
easier to learn about than to experience,
I can name the themes off my tongue as if
they were a book I knew every chapter too,

warmth,
comfort,
soft,
quiet,
fireplace,
kitchen,
baking—

I don't know what that looks like.
I don't know where that is.

In a month I'll sign my first lease,
settle into a place that is only mine,
walls that don't know rough voices,
a fresh start.

I am anxious, preparing for something that
may never come.

I am afraid
I don't know how to be still.

I'm afraid I never will.