

“The Good ‘Ole Red, White, and Blue”

Life here is slow,

learned that before learning to tell time.

Time was measured by how long it took Papa to come in from the fields,
or how many commercials played
before the living room erupted again
on a Saturday afternoon.

Husker football games—
red bleeding into every corner of the house.
I never understood the rules,
only that the sound carried,

across acres of fields and buildings,

from packed downtown bars

to the furthest farmhouse,

stitched together by antennas, loyalty,

and the belief that this year might be different.

Outside, the land was always working.
Papa moved with it,
the low churn of a combine
cutting lines into cornfields taller than me.

Inside, the click of keyboards across offices-

my dad’s fingers tapping out responsibility,
paper stacks and a half-empty Mountain Dew,
fluorescent lights humming.

Work was something you carried in your hands,
something you did because it needed doing.

Summers belonged to my nana’s lakehouse.
Cars lining the gravel, voices overlapping,
cornhole boards thudding,
yard games invented and forgotten the same afternoon.

Bare feet on scalding sand,
laughter drifting across water,
children counting to three and running for the dock.

The lake swallowed us whole.
Cold shock, shrieks, and for a moment,

nothing existed but floating.

Morning's meadowlarks and mourning doves,
their songs slipping through open windows
before I knew their names.
I thought the world was always that gentle.

Growing up here didn't feel like becoming,
it felt like waiting-
for crops to rise, lakes to thaw,
and myself to grow into space
this place had already saved for me.

And even now,
some part of me is still that little girl—
watching Papa disappear into the fields,
running barefoot toward the dock,
believing slow things matter
because they last.