

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

House Engraved

Hazel Kight Witham · Saturday, October 31st, 2020

The plastic ghouls and rope nets, wired spiders in frozen creep, this cemetery of street, this house cobwebbed in gauze of pretend decay, and along front window, the letters of her name, inked and hung with care.

One wants to read “Happy Halloween” there, but instead these letters, more ache, more memorial, renders whole house tombstone in predawn grief.

Now, houses haunted instead by the names of our dead, and somewhere across country a woman wishes we could not say her daughter’s name because no one, a country away, a lifetime distant, would even know it.

Her mother, somewhere in a sour bluegrass town, in a neighborhood where blessings are blistered by verdict, is gathering her tired bones into early day: the coffee, the eggs, the scents that persist. The light is slower now, tired too, she thinks, as mug clinks sink and every color unravels.

She did not ask, and will not know, that a home across yawn of country would cobweb hollybush and engrave daughter’s name with permanent marker onto so many white sheets, taped into rotten grin of windowed tombstone, glass pane reflecting, reckoning. Scar-smile of country still flush with stolen wealth, snuffed breath.

Mother muscles memory through one more stolen day, the name of her child whom she can still feel, baby damp and baby heft in her empty arms, her name, this exhale, this atoning air of shared mourning.

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