



“Flowers in the Attic”
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2024 Nebraska Youth Poet Laureate



FOR THE DEDICATION OF THE WILLA CATHER CHILDHOOD HOME
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When the days were still warm, before the bitter
cold hardened her throat, before the internal fire burned out.
She sat in the window while the rest of the house was sleeping.
You could see a single railroad lantern flickering in the distant attic window.
Somber, sullen sunsets, a palette of light, grasping onto youth
under the sanctimonious cloak of misty dusk like larks onto their simple song.
Transfixed by a glance into tomorrow, this room was a story in and of itself,
a secret romance, an incandescence.
Clandestine smoke, esoteric hidden artifacts too beautiful for the light,
one-way locks keep her safe.
A sanctuary of innocence tucked away from the fear of yesteryear
and the haunted helplessness of homely sentiment.
She found older and wiser companions in the petals that dotted her walls,
heavenly haunts searching for the sun.
Small maroon paper roses on yellowed grounds,
blossoming from seeds of memory and those who came before her.
Audacious trespassers into the past, lined with pine and poetry
and the sequestered dreams of a world beyond.
In her mind roared pleasant plans that had never before occurred,
secret gardens that she read books about as a precocious, tumultuous child.
Prophetic turmoil and lovelorn hope, she waits for what's to come
and what's destined for her. Where would she end?
For she knows, within these walls and among the whispering winds
of these widespread plains lies a repose, an idle life, a slumbering
juvenescence waiting to bloom.
They will break for her to breathe.
The asters and bluestem grow with her, milkweed and goldenrod
coursing through her veins and pulsating in her heart.
Soil and soul where she was free.
The broken ground and roaring storms are the mother and father who raised her,
the rolling hills and free spirit winds the siblings she was raised with.
Walls of refuge and reserve, she looks ahead to the bustling pavement
on the corner of tenth in the arms of a forbidden domestication.
And the years pass by like scenes of a silent film,
anticipatory marks of age creeping away.
Her aesthetic bleeds out, forgetting what the agony was all for.
But right now, she finds home in the attic of flowers with the railroad lantern
and secret clay-tinted ash and pine-soaked foundation.
How far would she go for one more blissful night? How far indeed.
And as the house sleeps, a circus of loved ones below,
she waits for tomorrow to come even slower.