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Matthew Bailey
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End of the Block

Matthew Bailey

At the edge of autumn and the end
of the street stands a faltering
fence guarding what's left of a two story
house, now merely a mess of
timberly broken glass
threatening to become nothing more
than a pile of memories, tattered and true.

The peeling paint and shattered shingles
leave intermittent traces of a home,
welcoming and warm, filled
with the sounds of summer, teeming
with the imperfect perfection reflected
in the eyes of a child growing up far too fast
and fleeing further from the seeming confines
of family, seeking something
always found
at the beginning and
remembered at the close.

When the wind softly whistles through
widening gaps in the wooded walls,
the dormant corpse becomes animated,
reminded of its slumber
waiting for the marriage of past and present
at a time where little is more
incommensurable than this,
impossible instants of wedding bells and
infant cries housed in a humble casket of
insulation and two-by-fours.

Testing the rusty hinges, the gate gives way
to a barren yard bookended by withering elms
whose weary arms once shaded

pirate quests and endless games of catch
carried out across the span of adolescence, now
fading in the albums on the top most shelf
gathering the same dust that settles on the windowsills.

Disturbed only by the last-lingering spirits haunting
this former abode—
seeking what is found at the end and
remembered in the middle—
this place is fettered
to simple requests,
for the winter to be the spring,
for the butterfly to become the caterpillar,
for the grown to be the innocent clinging
to plucked dandelions yellowing clinched fingers
without a care in the world.

But repairs cannot be made with cemetery stone:
what's left will continue to crumble
beneath the weight of a loss that will strip
the foundation to nothing
in the hopes that it can finally
forget and be forgotten,
drifting away in the autumn breeze
at the edge of eternity.