

2022 Wind & Water Writing Contest
First Prize Winner
POETRY

The Last Time I Was Your Daughter

By Sarah Williams

The last time I was your daughter
I noticed the colour of your eyes had changed to a milky blue green
Like the lake on a hot August day
Pleasure boaters racing around the bay
Dripping sunscreen and ketchup beneath the summer sun.

Your arms perched on your walker
Bent like a baby bird yet to unfurl from the nest,
Meanwhile your veins had begun to unspool beneath the weathered weight of many years,
Next to the Norway Maple in the family mausoleum.

You sat alone while I shifted
The weight of my belly stranding me, making us stay six feet apart
Like a ship moored in the desert during these Quarantine visits.
I used to count the minutes between them.

Do you remember
The way things bulge in the summer heat?
Corn stalks grow pregnant under a July sun
The fingers that pick their ripe bellies
Swollen as sausages,

The way death swells in the summer heat
Like a peach that goes from orange to brown, left hanging from its willowy tendril,
The sweet smell of rot and earth
With each rising and setting of the sun

I remember the way he swelled in those summer months
As the days grew longer and he grew slower
Transformed against the tedium of blue skies and the lullabies of crickets
When even the shade of his Maple could not cool him

Now, time has stretched
Like a rubber band about to break,
I look for him where the land meets the water
My eyes resting on that thin strip of blue, just out of reach.

That freshwater lake of memories.
I take a dip, but only for a moment,
And remember the way life and death crept forward in that summer heat
The last time I was his daughter.