

STILLP • INT  
A MAGAZINE IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

# LETTERS FROM MY CHILDHOOD

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## OJO TAIYE

*after Connie Post*

affection: my mother taught me the meaning. how easily our bodies yield under its barbs, each prick stirring up past tense as the day wears its lipstick & heaves forward. as a child, it's the plight of my mother that I endured, attached to a broken man, hand in hand, in an impassive monochrome, slanted against the deck in the parlor. there's no difference between loving & thinking you would be loved, until solitude is a pomegranate seed spilling its red on your feast—all night long I walk into the mouth of my childhood siesta. it's her first time out of bed since the assault—her peaceful face dappled with the switchblades of my father's claw—& I understood what I was becoming—a flood, a feline beast hiding in the dark— those intolerable times she scratched hard at death's gate. what crime had she committed? they call it woman & I know better. for months, I kill my father in my dreams & the house stinks of winter's falling spurs, the way my hands reach out for the names of old loves: I'm sorry if you are still reading this, I am tired of violence, the history of silence littered with the chorus of hope; my skin contracting underneath a beam of sun as women in borrowed fleece laugh in another room. I open my mouth & say it again: I don't want my sorrow to be this pretty—days bleed into years of beatings followed by her body lying lifeless in the shallow grave of a fault line. I need to tell the crows. I am missing my mother everywhere. the air between still holds the geometry of our dreams, the symmetry where the lines on our palms meet. my small heart pulsing, its roar, the weight of a cathedral I can no longer bear. nothing breaks open like this chasm passed down to every poem I write: her eyes perfectly still in the good room of our old house. what's this thing about love that my mother felt the need to hold one in her clammy hands?

*Ojo Taiye* is a young Nigerian artist who uses poetry as a tool to hide his frustration with society. He also makes use of collage and sample technique. He is the winner of many prestigious awards, including the 2021 Hay Writer's Circle Poetry Competition, and the 2021 Cathalbui Poetry Competition, Ireland.

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