

apple trees

Poetry • Zach Hughes

i used to walk down the aisle in robes
that felt like they came from a different century.
your house was my stone garden then.

the red fabric and creaking wood of pews,
the giggling children squirming in laps next to
“courting couples sitting thigh to thigh” were

apple trees
that i strolled past without a second thought
of the knowledge they might hold.

i used to keep my head down,
eyes squinted shut and hands bound together.
but i felt you one day.

kneeling before a priest, letting warmth
trickle down my throat and spread through my chest.
your broken body pressed gently into mine and
my body broke.

i stood from the red satin
and saw

people
adorned in their finest,
praying for a short prayer from the pulpit and
for buttery brunch biscuits.

teenage lovers stealing kisses beneath the stairwell
and feeling no shame,
little girls with wildflowers haphazardly crowning their curls,
and old widows darkly dressed,
smiling softly at me behind their veils.

i had learned a world where people fear death and hell
and squinched my eyes from the one where people lived
and breathed and had their being.

i ate an apple that day
and so loved the world.