**Poetry**

Ella Rachel Kerr

My poetry was not creeks, or hills or setting suns

It was never falling in love

My poems have never been made of red leaves or blue eyes or grass stains

They have never kept me warm at night

Instead, my poem was a navy scarf that I held over our heads when the sandstorm hit

I held it until my arms hurt while we crouched in the dust and covered our eyes

Then, my poetry was sweat stains

They swirled around in tie dye skirts and neon shirts in an orange bucket

That’s where we scrubbed our clothes: in the courtyard when the stars came out

It was too hot to scrub during the day, and at night the power would cut so we had to wash in the Glow of the moon

My poems laughed at small things

Hiccups

A baby’s face when they tried a mango the first time

The way young goats climbed and fell and climbed again

Miracles

When my poetry learned the language, it spoke louder, more confidently

It bought bananas at the correct price in the market

It knew how to say, “Diesel fuel only,” and

“Don’t play me like that,” and

“I know, my dear, I’m hungry, too.”

There was one month when my poems could not speak, I didn’t let them

They did not have words and neither did I because I covered my hair and attended four funerals that August

In Africa, you scream and moan during funerals

My grief was silent

Then I got the call from home that the family dog died, and I thought that I would melt into my own tears

But I never did

It was too dry to waste water like that

My poetry kept me strong because I found colors in the dust back then

There was poetry in small brown fingers insisting my hair needed braids

My poetry knelt at the foot at a well and screamed into its abyss

My poetry climbed a tree and found fruit there

It held a baby of a pregnant child and knew love in a new way

It sunburned my lips

It pricked at my ribs

It showed me which way home was

It told me I would never be lost again

It promised me I would never be lost again