Fox Prints

Kelly McGlade

Two foxes in Fox Heath from April to July–
glance through the second-story
bedroom window, spring wind
blowing through airy screens, faint perfume,
to catch a quick flash of auburn, ruddy
under the gray-boughed oak tree and the
forest strip at the base of our backyard slope.

My home street and another in north-side Fox Heath
bookended a wooded line thick with
swaying trees of heaven, maple, dogwood.
I could forget that our house didn't back onto
pure frontier, an endless manifest destiny to a
nine-year-old's obsession with the natural world,
stretching rubber band slingshots and scraping
sticks into spears and arrows.

The soles of my feet toughened, grass-stained,
running through tick-brush and spined raspberry boughs,
sucking green air deep through my little limber body
as moss and roots and acorn caps pressed between my bare toes.
Distant living room lights in the evening dark became
fairy glimmers, fireflies, flitting into neighbors' yards
as the sunlight, velvet-soft and purple, dropped a cloak
of evening over eyes well-attuned to woods-edge.
My hair, a quick flash of fox-auburn between the grainy trunks
and the swaying leaves of spring, a surveyor of
suburban wilderness.

Smell it on the Air

Kelly McGlade

A home holds a scent all its own–
cobwebs clinging to the corner of carpeted stairs,
mulch paste on the boots by the back door,
plastic-wood lacquer, and cotton pillowcases.

Yours, you only now detect, now that
your most recent memories are January despair and
silent nights, the job that had you crawling back
and forth across that intersection at the center of your
old world every fall-into-winter break,
pressing and preserving every scrap that remains,
collecting fewer and fewer memories in that town,
that house.

A home settles and lingers on, unchanged,
while you change too rapidly for that old box to keep up
because home-wear is decades in the making
and you've only been out a few years, but
it's enough that your nose is losing its
blind attunement, enough to make it just a little
    unfamiliar