

Life Line

Lauren Bell

The sun is too hot today, the world too bright. I shield my eyes as I check the washing, feeling the cotton-thin clothes flapping, multi-coloured sails in the wind. They make a heavy slap slap slap sound as I inspect every garment hanging there.

I walk through socks and underwear, past t-shirts and towels to dresses and trousers. Here, they billow like hot air balloons. The skirts are fanning out like bright umbrellas and the trouser legs are like maniac arms grasping for anything that might be within reach.

I step back and lose my footing. My ankle buckles beneath me, origami collapsing in on itself, the scream dying in my throat.

I look straight up into the sun, and for a moment, I am completely blinded, dazzled by the fluorescent polka dots spotting my sight. The sun casts a blonde halo over me and my garden, bathing us in platinum light. I close my eyes and remember the beginning, where everything started. I look at the endless stretch of washing, marvelling at how fast they have grown, sprouting like sunflowers. It seemed only yesterday when they could fit easily into my opened palms. And now they're as big, if not bigger than me. I am dwarfed by their shadows.

But here, right now, I am glowing, studying lives on the line, thinking about their milk white limbs elsewhere. Wrapped around another, their laughter tickling someone else's ears. I smile, quietly shedding a tear, because this is all I have left of them. I have to share them, knowing in another hour or so, they'll be gone and I'll be left on my own again.

But I'll always have their washing because that's what mums are for.