

Fences: The Feeling of Yellow

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## Fences:

### The Feeling of Yellow

Nineteen years ago, a time when my knees barely rose above the willowy grass of our lawn, found me cowering in the doorway of our house, my tiny body consuming the fiery heat of the late afternoon sun. From a vantage point I was much accustomed to, I watched my mother. My frightened eyes peeped timidly upwards where they were soon shocked into attention. A loud bang rattled the room, and I screamed as the walls shook and wood splintered to the floor around my feet. My mom was a recognizable savage. Her rage filled the air, and the chair she'd thrown laid in mangled pieces not even inches from where I'd stood.

And even at two years old, I was used to these eruptions. These volcanic explosions of fury and fervor were the only impressions I had of my mother—the only side of her I saw and the only one I knew. And even then, I was haunted by them, assuming, in my innocence, that the release of her demons was my fault. It wasn't until many years later that I understood: it wasn't only the demons to blame, it was the spirits.

From the time of that first memory, an air of mystery and anarchy permeated my thoughts and surrounded my mother. Her sporadic appearances became only added to the charade and secrecy she portrayed. She was a being only present some birthdays and Christmases, but one omnipresent in the confused consciousness of my cluttered young mind. 'Mother' became synonymous with 'dread.'

That day the chair splintered, my mom taught me how yellow felt. The sun sucked up the color, introducing me to a liquid and hazy hue. Where the sun should caress, it burned. Much like my mother, where it should enlighten and inspire, it ruined and scalded. Yellow whispered provision and renewal but its touch was scorching isolation.

I wish I would have known fences then. I didn't yet know how to shield myself from suffering. I didn't know there were things in the world that warranted boundaries at all. And I didn't learn until later how to form fences. But what I did know even at my young age: yellow was a lie.

### Chain-link

If I stood within the little diamonds that formed the chain-link and stretched my neck to the point of strain, I could almost see over the top of the fence and into my neighbor's yard. The yard was sparsely decorated and always empty. But it held one thing that captivated my attention: an old yellow wooden swing. I didn't know then that the swing would introduce me to a home that held me better than my own.

I was five when they moved in. I watched as the once barren yard became a miniature amusement park. They added a tire swing, a zip line leading to shallow waters, and a tree house.

Again, I stood in the chain-link, hands raw and red, and wished there were no boundaries.

Through the fence, I called to the blonde boy. "Can I use your swing?" He was currently rocking back and forth on the yellow board I so envied.

The boy shrugged. "I guess, but it's my turn right now."

That reluctant statement was all the confirmation I needed.

I finished my trek over the fence and looked behind me. A jungle met my eyes. The bushes barricaded any real view. But the glowing summer jasmine drifted towards me in the breeze, and the bamboo towered behind the wooden shed in the middle of our yard. I had never seen my yard from a visitor's viewpoint before. But I had an entire amusement park now. Why would I want a jungle?

I turned back to my newfound adventure and found the brash blonde looking at me with crossed arms. "I guess you can have your turn now," he said, his hand stopping the swing's sway.

The painted yellow board creaked as it swung me higher. Higher than anywhere I'd ever been before, towards Heaven's light. The breeze caught my hair, causing the long golden waves to tremor and fall. Up here, the glimmering sun rays caught me with eyes wide open before releasing me into my new reality.

Summers stayed and strayed, leaving in their wake little memories with my new friends: tomboy madness and bunkbed secrets, home-grown garden suppers set inside the lawn mower-created homemade baseball field on the lawn. There were zip-lined brigades to the shallows at the edge of the yard and tree-house carvings and codes that all disappeared, secreted behind our lips, once we crossed the kitchen's watery linoleum tiles.

I learned a sense of adventure fences never could confine, and the sunshine was the right shade again: a pale and inviting saffron that saturated my very bones.

#### Chicken Wire: From A Viewpoint Across the Fence

The finish rubs off in your hands, cheap chicken-wire plastic yielding to iron. Fingertips rusty and red, you guide the wire around its new partner: damp wood embraces the weakened, feigned fibers.

Sunshine has birthed this day, and you think it forged her, too. Today, she smells of lavender and sweat swirled with a spice and sweetness you can't quite put your finger on. Her hair glints violet in this afternoon's summer. She was blonde long ago, but you think she looks better this way, more real. Occasionally, she pushes her hair over her shoulders in your direction as if it wasn't already magnetic enough. As if you weren't already hopelessly welded to its shimmer.

The heat kisses her cheeks crimson, and you know that, later, once she's washed the day off and her cold palms find her face, she'll tell you she should have worn sunscreen. And you told her so. Had told her that the lemon summer wouldn't hesitate to cook everything in its path, including her. Her stubbornness should bother you—especially when it hurts her—but, instead, it pours through you like honey: warm and lilac.

Your eyes braze her body, fluid hips yield to sharp ribs that soothe. She stiffens and turns at the waist, purposely accentuating the curves your hands cradle like a Catholic holds a rosary.

She smiles. And her cheekbones display it well. Her happy coaxes her spine straighter and lightens her russet eyes. The same smile that encapsulates and enchants strangers is yours.

All yours. Damp earth stains the crimson stain across her cheeks. Yet, somehow, she seems even more warm this way. Like she is honey, too.

The chicken wire hugs the post, its new home, and you hammer in the nail that you hold. Minutes ago, she wouldn't stop asking you to let her help.

"It's *our* garden after all," she whines, emphasizing the second word.

You wouldn't hear of it. She could accidentally hammer her finger instead. Her fragile, lily white fingers grip your arm in case the hammer slips. And, even though she hurts herself, you'd never let anything touch her. Lilies, iron, and sunshine were never meant to coexist.

### Fences for Miles

I hold tighter, mesh my solvent elbows with the lines of his chest. Maybe, if I hold tighter, it'll stop his ribs from shaking. Blue so deep it claws its way out in sputters and sobs. An overflowing well: the brim is clouded with murky tears and phlegm-coated words. If he is midnight right now, I am amber. His light in the dark—but I am trying to illuminate my own onyx: splashes of dandelion against a dripping, draining dusk.

Light sparks, flickers, fades. And I am leaving here today. Putting miles of fences between him and I, later and now. He talks, and I cannot hear—words are writing themselves over and over and over again in my head. I'm listening to their slow sprint, their scrawl on the slick velvet canvas of mind over matter: "Maybe if I hold him tighter, it'll stop his ribs from shaking. Hold him tighter. Tighter. Hold him tighter."

Silence.

I don't pray except during the last eighteen seconds when I've been begging God to give him some peace. Plead, wait, hold. Feel amber melt midnight. Pause, wait. Hold. Tighter. Their sprawl is artifice—slipping sharp against silk. I cannot hear him—these words have pulled me too far away into another abyss altogether. But all of the darkest darks look the same.

I listen to rhythm, wager with Myth, and tense in the too-loud dandelion-drenched air. Wisps of shadows sneak in, drench an embrace already flooded with collapsed faces. I want to stay his yellow, but I can't even be my own.

Brief Biography: I am majoring in English with a focus in Writing Studies at TAMUCC. I have produced a Haas-award winning research paper, presented "Coinage for Caring," at the 2019 TAMUCC graduate conference, and have published multiple original poems in a collegiate literary journal in Waco, Texas. I currently work as a writing consultant and have also served as Assistant Editor of Fiction for TAMUCC's literary journal, *The Windward Review*. In my spare time, I enjoy exploring nature in Corpus Christi, visiting The Cattery, watching romantic comedies, and spending time with loved ones in Waco, Texas.