

CHERRY SEASON

Priscilla Daniels-Mark

My Mama and Daddy drove North with my sister and me
To Washington
In a rusty red colored Chevy station wagon
Listening to “Crystal Blue Persuasion”
Over and over
New tires then
The engine checked
A map in the glove compartment with my Daddy’s black oil prints on it
An address of a cherry farm in Washington that my mother gripped the whole way
Using it as a fan when it got hot
Folding it a hundred different ways when she got bored
My little sister and I in the back seat drinking thick carnation milk that came from a can
I preferred my Mamas breastmilk from what she said
When we landed in the green landscape
We didn’t have time to settle in
Or money to get Nostalgic
Rain a blessing
It made music tip tapping against the metal of the hood
It was the last thing we heard before we fell asleep in our cocoon
With the smell of sweat sifting away from the days labor
Sweet baby dreams sometimes
Other nights awoken by a crick in the neck
Nothing that some midnight mota couldn’t help
Mama and Daddy smoked on the hood of the car on clear nights

Watching for the stars that moved between the trees
Waiting until those lights disappeared
They never expected so much rain
And they opened their mouths to catch it when they got thirsty
and bottled it in jugs
My mama recalled standing on a wooden orchard ladder
The kind that has three legs
A deer sniffed at her shoes
While she held me in her arms
Breastfeeding me
While she baby talked the deer
Letting it lick her fingers
Cherry juice flowing through all of our veins