

The Cemetery Next to My House

Perciful Adams lies near a grove of pine trees, his gravestone half sunk. He's closest to our yard. Born 1810 Dead 1862. Husband. Everything else is illegible, blanked by weather, time, neglect.

I sip leftovers from amber beer bottles littered by drunk teens and crush crabapples underfoot. Their trees showy with baby girl pink petals in the spring, then widowed brown in the fall dropping its hard, bitter fruit on the ground.

Crows rule here, their eyes black and piercing like my father's, until they rolled back in his head. They cry to me, sharp and loud. I ignore their pleas. Fumble with my lighter and joint.

Philip Gentry. Born 1944 Dead 1977. Everything else is a lie. Blanked by secrets. I lay in the shadow of his marker, his only daughter, his last victim. The grave covered with autumn leaves, brittle as yellowed newspaper, cradles me.

Wool clouds dampen the sun. I close my eyes, drown into the past.