

Lasänma says:

*it feels like a “honey in red rose tea” type of day...*



Ákù, 2004

a wood stove intentionally dented  
so one can cook on top.  
a few feet over sits a bunk bed fit for four.  
the tv sits snug on the kitchen table.

insulation, wood dust, & paint fumes linger into the night.  
by morning our lungs have no air, our body has no soul.

letters fly back & forth,  
a plea for housing till the work is done;  
& every time, the cold response:

*you can't be assisted,  
as we must abide by the housing policy.<sup>1</sup>*

because a suitable environment for children isn't the priority here.

a commotion to finish the bathroom,  
to relieve us from the outhouse;  
& eventually, we'll be pissing in a doorless lavatory,  
with taps that don't bring water.

Semo hauls jugs of water into the white cavalier,  
we drive carefully down the alaska hwy.  
she boils pots atop the beaten wood stove  
& carries buckets upstairs for our bath.  
construction workers leave behind half-ass jobs. knobs screwed in wrong.  
hot is cold,

cold is hot,

a cracked window in the main bedroom, a deck with no railings,  
& more.

it doesn't matter

*as long as we abide  
by the housing policy.*

the siding will be unfinished for the next fifteen years,  
leaving room for rot & mould  
to manifest in childhood bedrooms.

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1 "The house must be at occupancy stage within the first year of funding."



when i was five, Ätà showed Ämbada & me how to snare rabbits.  
he took us out on a winter morning, bright & early,  
& we trekked around the yard looking for tracks.  
he showed us what rabbit tracks looked like & how to gently  
step over the path  
so the rabbits wouldn't know we'd been there.  
Ätà showed us how to set the snare  
& how to place brush around it to ensure the trap would work.

we must have set fifteen snares under the setting sun.  
the next morning we headed out into the crisp cold air.  
we caught five rabbits that day,  
so we reset the traps & continued to check on them daily.

out of all the rabbits, we only kept one.  
the rest were given to the elders in town,  
Ämbada & i received many hugs & blessings.

months later, Ämbada & i were trick-or-treating  
when we reached one of the elders' homes, Ätsk'ia.  
her eyebrows jumped over her glasses when she saw us.  
*i have something for you two!*  
she came back with two pairs  
of beautifully sewn mittens  
lined with rabbit fur.



pb&j for me            just jam for Āmbada  
we smother whitebread  
squishing slices together  
adding another sandwich to the pile

we harvest blankets  
burgundy tea sets  
& our favourite stuffies  
we set up a picnic on the balcony  
with no rails

the balcony that does not exist anymore  
torn down in the renovation  
that came too late

sitting on the rickety boards we eat  
gently placing pieces into the mouths of our teddy bears  
while we watch Ātā working on a truck outside  
radio blaring behind him  
bepsi jingles & weather reports  
he ducks under the black truck with the painted flames on the hood  
even though we all know it is destined for the graveyard