



Where I'm From

By Johnnie Each

I am from the poetry of high school sweethearts;
 all Friday night lights, and cornfields, and first real love.
I am from the prose of rain on that old church's roof.
 (You can hear it whoosh and pound in the wedding video,
 almost like the sky wanted to come in to hear their vows.)
I am from a small town public pool with hot cement and much too salty popcorn.
 (My mother took me there the week after I was born,
 and most days after.)
I am from dancing on hard wooden pews and
 collecting plastic communion cups and
 running- always running- up and down the aisles after my brother.
I am from the calloused caring hands of countless hard workers,
 raising the Pastor's daughter along with him. Loving her like she didn't deserve.
I am from moving trucks.
 Down to the desert and back up again. Like a tired, slow swing.
I am from Great Aunt Luella's quilt: just faded patterns and red yarn falling from their stitches.
 Not much, but it kept her warm in Ethiopia, where she wrote
 "Good News" on her fingertips and shook hands with everyone she met.
 And now it keeps me warm too.
I'm from singing when it isn't needed and chipped piano keys and night lights and stage lights.
I am from a stubborn peach tree, who decided to grow even in southern Iowa.
 We still have pies from two summers ago,
 when her branches brushed the grass, heavy with ripe fruit.
 I don't like peaches, but I did that July.
I am from crock pots and potlucks and sloppy joes enjoyed on the corpse of a barn.
 I'm from long summer days and burning hillsides and fireflies just out of reach.
 I'm from the soft yellowed pages of books.
 From the imagination of Montgomery and Austen and Shakespeare.
I'm from tall tales and home videos and newspaper clippings and
 oh! I'm from too many words.
I am from my Daddy's strong shoulders
 and my Mother's guitar strings.
I am from "Keep your nose clean. Remember whose you are. Don't forget."

But most of all, more than anything,

 I am from an empty grave and a promise to return one day.