



Butterfly

By Aliya Klughammer

It was something about that house, I was sure. It was built by my grandfather's callused hands.

In the room where my father had slept as a child, there was a bed shrouded in cobwebs. It was safe, my grandmother told me, once. The bed didn't sit apart from the wall, but instead was a part of it. Smooth wood peeked out from the wall, sinewy and slimy with years of neglect.

The bones of the house protruding from its insides, like teeth.

I lay cradled inside that mossy cavity, and my dreams warped.

There was a butterfly, resting on a leaf. I had searched for it everywhere, in my dreamland—through empty shopping malls, and vacant parking lots. It had led me to the woods, where the trees stretched like fingers overhead. Knuckles knocked together, beckoning me deeper.

I was afraid that if I came too close, I would scare the butterfly away, so I remained frozen in agonizing stillness. I longed to kneel among the flowers and scrutinize the butterfly's beautiful wings. I

balanced on the edge of the world—should I move forward and risk losing the butterfly, or remain where I was?

In the end, I sprang forwards out of the underbrush, cupping my hands so I could catch the creature if I was quick enough. Wings bent beneath my hands, snapping.

The butterfly had been dead, all along. A peaceful death—but a death all the same.

The fractures in my palms were brittle.