

WORKDAYS

by Jada Reyes

It's 4 in the morning
& the smells of dad's breakfast:
buttery, over-easy eggs
& crispy bacon left in the oven for too long,
hang above my headboard.

By 4:30, his coffee is lukewarm from the cold,
thick vanilla creamer, & the sweet clips
of brown sugar are melting into the frothy Bustelo.
His 36 years of steps on warehouse floors
& paint store floors & concrete sidewalks,
all mixed with shoes half a size too small,
wear him down to bone spurs & brittle ankles
like tiny vases. As tendons peel away like mango skins,
the corn chip scented leashes are waiting for familiar hands.
The dogs' tails whip the air like fly swatters in a slick
& sticky summer.

He doesn't take long walks
anymore. Everyone I know that's over 35
& works to eat, is in the same kind of pain.
Sometimes, he jokes about dozing off on the road,
getting a blink on that long highway to Merritt Island –
a faded black sheet safe for all kinds of dreams. When
he comes home from work – safe but sore,
sleepy but silly – we let out a collective breath
the size of a hurricane cloud.

Biography

Jada A. Reyes (she/her) is a poet, abolitionist, and the daughter of Nuyoricans. She is currently based in Orlando, Florida where she is both melting and studying poetry at the University of Central Florida. Her poems can be found or are forthcoming in *ProLit Magazine*, *The Grief Peace Anthology*, and *The Cypress Dome Literary Magazine*.