

Excerpt from “Elmendorf Lane”

By Ananya Vahal

I pull up into the driveway and I’m greeted by overgrown trees. The grass is dead in some parts and overgrown in others. There are mushrooms and weeds all over the front and the backyard. The flower beds are full of dried up dirt and have no mulch left in them. My mother’s roses are all dead. This house has seen better days.

The days of innocence and endless possibilities left along with Sid. Soon after, Mom, Dad and I left too. It was time to try new things and find a new life that didn’t remind us of the past. We thought we had beaten and weathered the storm. After all, Sid got a second chance at life.

I return to the place that taught me about life, trying not to think about the fact that for the last four years strangers have been living in what used to be my room, my kitchen, and my living room.

LIVING ROOM

Despite being completely empty, the living room still disarms me with its coziness accentuated by the warm wooden floor. I can still see the faint outline of our cuckoo clock on the wall above the fireplace. The birds would come out and sing a soft cuckoo every thirty minutes.

Occasionally we had guests that considered it annoying and asked us how we lived with it but for the most part our guests, especially children, adored it. Long after I moved out, I often heard a soft “cuckoo” randomly in the middle of the day in my head no matter how far away from home I was.

BACKYARD

The back door in the kitchen tempts me with delicious promises of BBQs with the smell of tandoori chicken on the grill and cold beers. Surrounded by the laughter of family and friends along with the screams of delight from children running around and playing in the backyard. I open the door excitedly expecting to find the swing to my right where I spent countless hours sitting and reading *Harry Potter*. As I look over, I'm shocked and disappointed to see the swing isn't there. What am I thinking? It hasn't been there since Mom and Dad moved to Florida four years ago. I go back inside the house disappointed by the broken promises of the back door.