Hunt

Viktor Ziak

Glistening blood trails through trees.

The bone must have broken through the animal's skin.

Snapped branches stained crimson trace an easy path to follow.

She is exhausted but certain the animal is more so.

She is closing in.

A child running through the tall grass,

laughter spilling like marbles over warm fields.

It is just before dusk when she finds her prey.

The small body lies curled up on the forest floor, thin limbs twitching feebly.

Shallow breaths escape the lungs, surrounded by the growing pool of blood.

A memory then, of screams,

feet hitting warm asphalt, a tumble and scraped knees. A delicate, steady hand wiping away tears.

The huntress steps closer and kneels. Not woman nor man, just a child, and the fear in those dark brown eyes that mirrored her own.

They always made her think of deer.

“Mother.”

It comes not as a question. It is acceptance, a simple greeting. It is nothing at all.

The one who has not been called mother for so long

(to whom the title will soon belong no more) pulls out a knife.

And as the gut hook breaks the afternoon light, colours dance on her face.

No protests, nowhere to run. The soft skin parts easily, the knife cuts like a diver through water, elegant and smooth.

Everything cold.

Eyes turn deep gold in the sunlight. Smell of pine and salt water,

sharp metallic taste.

Pulsating warmth escaping upwards in streams of pungent vapour.