

2018

## Empty

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### Recommended Citation

Dahan, Noa (2018) "Empty," *The Laureate*: Vol. 17 , Article 34.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol17/iss1/34>

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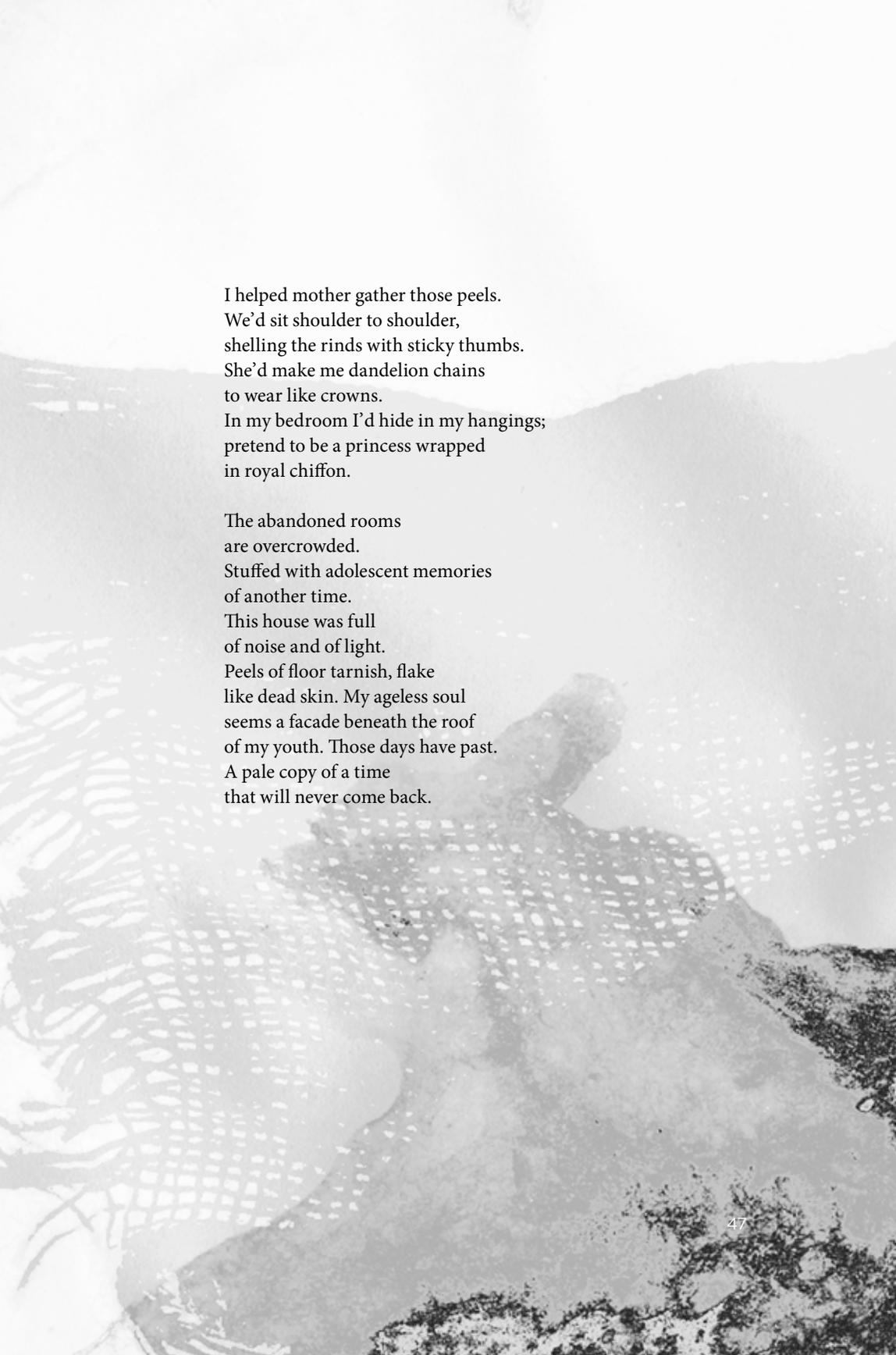
## Empty

*Noa Dehan*

A rickety door  
hanging  
on a broken hinge.  
Shattered chain drawn  
across a sinking facade.  
Through the roof's gaping cavity,  
not a ray of light shines.  
Rot hides  
on the underside of fallen shingles.

I duck under  
the splintered frame.  
Spiders dangle  
from frostbitten webs. Peels  
of rosy paint line the floor.  
Road maps to the rat holes  
punched in walls.  
The inside is not prettier than the facade.

I remember a time that façade  
was yellow and straight.  
A Dalmatian puppy burrowed  
beneath a white picket fence.  
Sun infiltrated the house  
through the crystalline portal.  
And gay whispers of wind chimes  
swung from greased chains.  
Outside smelled earthy  
because mother composted orange peels.



I helped mother gather those peels.  
We'd sit shoulder to shoulder,  
shelling the rinds with sticky thumbs.  
She'd make me dandelion chains  
to wear like crowns.  
In my bedroom I'd hide in my hangings;  
pretend to be a princess wrapped  
in royal chiffon.

The abandoned rooms  
are overcrowded.  
Stuffed with adolescent memories  
of another time.  
This house was full  
of noise and of light.  
Peels of floor tarnish, flake  
like dead skin. My ageless soul  
seems a facade beneath the roof  
of my youth. Those days have past.  
A pale copy of a time  
that will never come back.