

she stays.

little hand, looped around my father's worn thumb.
i pull him through the colourful crowds of slurpees and fairy floss,
laughing,
weaving,
beaming smiles under
the middle-of-july sun.

i drag my father into
the century-old barn,
faded wooden planks line the pens,
memories of children embedded in their weathered seams.

*a little girl stares down the road where she's always lived,
the crisp air bites her face,
gnawing deep circles of red into her cheeks.
"Otōsan!"¹
a shattered cry, from
b r o k e n lips.*

the engine sighs

*little girl emerges from the train,
suitcase, heavy in one hand,
Okaasan in the other.²*

*mice scurry across the gravel path.
behind her,
soot-coloured crows*

perch,

the barbed wire gate is shut.

i join the crowd
excitement bubbles.
"Dad!"
chick in palm,
click, flash.

¹ "Otōsan" is Japanese for "Dad"

² "Okaasan" is Japanese for "Mom"

*she follows behind the crowd of fellow aliens.
wind, whipping,
raw hands.
tattered shoes shuffle along the tracks of race horses,
soft muttering of familiar sounds, now sorrowful,
flood her ears.*

stinging eyes

*“Otōsan?”³
a single tear freezes to her chin.*

we leave,

she enters,

heading home.

she stays.

³ “Otōsan” is Japanese for “Dad”

Artist's Statement

The grounds used for the Pacific National Exhibition, previously called “Happy Land,” — now a place of joy and laughter —served as a Japanese Internment camp during the World War, uprooting and separating thousands of families and forcing them to live like livestock. In my poem, “*she stays*” I contrast the experiences of two little girls on the PNE grounds, one from the present day, and one from 1942. Through extensive research, I use these two perspectives to emphasize the effects of Japanese Internment on children and the importance of realizing the unjust actions carried out by the Canadian Government. In “*she stays*” I highlight my theme of contrasts by creating parallels between the stories of the two girls. My hope is that this poem brings awareness to the disturbing truths of Canadian History through the eyes of children.